

MERRY ENGLAND.

AUGUST, 1883.

Circuitous Thoughts.

COUNTRY cousins and suburban sight-seers are apt to disturb the urbane equilibrium of the placid Londoner by wanting to know "Where are the new Law Courts, and how can we see them?"—the result of which query is, that he and his party find themselves, in due course, before the ornate portico facing the Strand, passing under which they are surrounded by such a variety of doors that "All hope of finding your way abandon, ye who enter here," might be fittingly emblazoned about as a motto. However, after gazing at the beautiful stone roof of the central hall, the sight-seers, impatient to see justice at work, will stumble up the gloomy winding staircases, "where the footfall of the doomed criminal must echo like a *pas perdu*," as one romantic lady somewhat hazily remarked. The visitors will, however, probably find that the greater number of the courts are vacant and closed; and upon inquiry will be told, to their astonishment, that while they have come up to London to see Justice, Justice has gone down to the country to see them and their "friends." Yet so it is that for weeks, four times in the year, this magnificent building, on which Mr. Street exhausted the fertility of his talent, and the taxpayers their money, must remain deserted amidst the sighs of suitors come from all parts of the country to await important

mercantile and social decisions, because English tradition requires the gaols to be delivered of their burdens by Her Majesty's Judges alone.

And thus it happens that in the railway-stations of certain country towns, distracted passengers, searching for their luggage along a crowded platform, sometimes become aware of unusual obstacles to their pursuit. In the first place, all the portmanteaux appear to have transformed themselves during their temporary seclusion into large blue and red cloth bags, which, impelled by unseen forces, come hurtling forth from the dark depths of the luggage van, like a shower of meteoric bolts. Ere curiosity can overcome amazement, another surprising obstacle makes a side diversion ; for the traveller, on turning to appeal from the hard-hearted porter to the tenderer emotions of a well-paid guard, finds himself confronted by a stout gentleman arrayed in brilliant scarlet, the glow of which extends to his face, while a sword, a cocked hat, and a fluttering plume, give additional splendour to his appearance. Starting back, the bewildered luggage-hunter treads on the toe of a staid elderly gentleman, who looks unutterable things, but passes on in dignified silence, and is apparently a component part of the procession, at the close of which hovers a nervous shadowy individual, arrayed in college gown, with a college trencher cap alternately lodged on his head or twirled in his hand.

Thus does the judicial trinity of sheriff, judge, and chaplain suddenly reveal itself to any astonished layman who happens to be at the railway station of an assize town on the eve of the opening of "The Commission." Then it passes out of sight into legal chaos as quickly as the sheriff's sword, the judge's railway rugs, and the chaplain's trencher will allow. Yet, once, all this had a meaning, easily read, wherever the king's writ ran, and perfectly well comprehended by any one after whom the writ was running. That stout gentleman in red was once the representative of all law and order in the county. "As keeper

of the king's peace," Blackstone tells us, "he (the sheriff) is the first man in the county, and superior in rank to any nobleman therein; he may apprehend and commit to prison all persons who break or attempt to break the peace; he is bound to pursue all traitors, murderers, felons, &c., he is also to defend the county against the king's enemies, and at his command the 'power of the county is summoned in array.'" That shadow of a State Church, too, was once filled up by the substantial form of a bishop, whose well-aired fee and profound knowledge of the civil law formerly gave him precedence of both earl and common-law judge; but now the civil law is a mere conundrum, over which a pseudo-ecclesiastical judge, "sitting where he ought not," amuses himself at guessing, while the hardened criminal of the nineteenth century appears to set no value on "the benefit of clergy." How has all this change come about? and why should the sober gentleman in railway wraps and high hat, as the judge now is, have eclipsed or rather blotted out the influence of his brilliantly appareled companions?

The answer is short: the supremacy of the Judge of the King's Court is the outcome of the triumph of centralization over local autonomy; it is the corollary of the proclamatory preface of an old statute, "whereas this realm of England is one Empire." The sheriff was the representative of all the old county or shire government which drifted down from Anglo-Saxon times. He was the presiding authority at the Shire-moot, together with the earls, the clergy, and the freemen. In Norman times his duties, in addition to those magisterial, were also of a financial and military character. He collected the revenues of the king, supervised his domains, and was responsible for military levies and dues being raised. But the Norman kings, in addition to the desire of consolidating their kingdom, also found judicial and court fees to be a convenient source of revenue, and accordingly the king's justice was offered as a very superior article to local justice to every one who liked to pay for

it. The sheriff still summoned to the county meeting the archbishops, bishops, abbots, barons, knights, landowning lords and their stewards, burgher representatives of the town, the parish priest, the reeve and his four men from every hundred and wapentake ; but now it was to meet the king's justice who twice a year came his "tourn" or circuit throughout the provinces. In early Norman days the highest officers of the king were appointed to distribute the king's justice ; and the Chief Justiciar, accompanied by a bishop, is related to have been among the earliest to undertake these duties. "These journeys (or circuits)," says Stubbs, "were the substitute under the Norman kings for the progresses of the earlier sovereigns who, while moving from one of their estates to another, heard the complaints of defects of justice in the lower courts." But in the time of Henry II., under the statutes called "the great assize," and "the assize of Northampton," it was enacted that two justices should twice a year go these circuits ; and finally, under Magna Charta, two justices and four knights were to hold these county assizes quarterly. Gradually knights and lords and prelates preferred to stay at home looking after their own affairs, or to keep attendance on the king's court, and to compound for local duties as county magnates by the payment of small fines, much as the upper classes in the present time avoid their duties to the State as jurymen.

On the other hand, the sheriff's offices were one by one curtailed, his judicial functions were invaded by the itinerant justice of the King's Bench, his financial responsibilities by the king's coroners, while his executive power of arresting criminals, of levying hue and cry, and of keeping order throughout the county, was gradually absorbed by the justices of the peace, headed by the Lord Lieutenant of the county, who were nominated by the Crown, and were merely the outermost fibres of the all-absorbing central executive. Apart from seeing that the king's writ is not obstructed in its execution, and apart

from the general entertainment and protection of the judges and the courts on their quarterly circuits, the sheriff's duties are now somewhat honorary, though involving considerable expense. Even the privilege of raising hue and cry in pursuit of the accused criminal is now only equally distributed between him, the local magistracy, and the parish constables ; doubtless the criminal would be only too glad to procure the restoration of his privilege, since, in that case, he might have a fairer chance of escape. In the visits of the itinerant justices, then, we may still see "the connecting link between the Curia Regis and the Shire-moot, between Royal and Popular justice," between the old system of our Saxon forefathers and the new reign of centralized authority erected by Norman and Plantagenet Kings—afterwards to be adapted to the modern view of that abstraction, the State. Thus military, ecclesiastical, and county government have all retired into the shade behind the blazing sun of a centralized judiciary, represented by Her Majesty's Justice of Assize for Oyer, Terminer, and General Gaol Delivery, now barely recognizable in the railway station from an ordinary first-class passenger, but to-morrow to be seen in court in all the glory of red and ermine.

It is interesting to speculate how long this display of traditional pomp will stand the crucial test of ridicule. In the eyes of the practical middle-class the day spent in the opening of the Commission, the cathedral service, and the chaplain's sermon (which vital ceremonies sometimes invade the hours of the morning of the second day of the Circuit), the sheriff, the trumpets, and the general display—all these have already assumed the aspect of simple or rather complex obstruction, and it may well be doubted whether even now the lower classes do not consider it as rather a good joke to have a "red judge" down from London to watch over the trial of their doubtful innocence. Coming School Boards cast their shadows before them, and the criminal of the future with true business

faculties will doubtless prefer prompt justice and simple procedure to pomp and delay.

Let us assume, however, that all these preliminary obstacles have been surmounted ; the judge has delivered himself of his charge to the Grand Jury ; that august body have retired to their mystic duty ; and their disappearance has been simultaneous with the appearance of the Bar ; for the latter are excluded from the hearing of the Judge's charge, in case they should adopt his views or take a hint as to the course to be pursued in any case on which he may have commented : a genuine instance of the red-tapism of fair-play characteristic of English justice. The officer of the Court is now employed in shouting out the names of the jurors summoned to their county's help, and these pillars of the law sheepishly obey the call like schoolboys summoned from their play, ensconcing themselves behind that bulwark of the Constitution, the jury-box. During the pause in the ceremony, while the Court and jury wait for the true bills to be handed in by the Grand Jury, we may meditate a moment on the origin and use of these two bodies. The Grand Jury inherit, perhaps, the more genuine characteristic of the original jury ; for this body, when it first appears in any definite shape, had for its object the presentment of the inquisition against the accused—that is to say, these twelve knights and freemen of the county inquired into all the crimes alleged to have taken place in the county, and formally founded definite accusations against those accused of such. Originally, indeed, they seemed to have sat as the judges of such crimes ; but in early historical times they would appear to have been the witnesses who came to present their evidence at the Shire-moot. Gradually, however, as the king's justice became more and more paramount, the grand jury were merely the preliminary tribunal before which a definite accusation or indictment was presented, and upon the true finding of which the accused was brought before the itinerant

judge at the County Assize. But even these preliminary duties were by degrees encroached upon, for accused parties might be brought before any of the justices nominated to keep the peace of the counties by the Crown under later Norman kings ; and if a *prima facie* case were made out, they were committed for trial at sessions or assizes.

Thus it has come about that the grand jury are little more than a court of review of the *prima facie* charge brought against the accused, and sanctioned by the magistrate ; for they hear only the witnesses for the prosecution, and their decision is taken by a majority, provided it be a majority of twelve —the number of the Grand Jury being generally thirteen, but the maximum allowable being twenty-three. The one distinct advantage of such a Court of Review of accusations is, that while the magistrate is bound to commit the accused if a *prima facie* case (provided it be not a case for summary jurisdiction) be made out, the Grand Jury have a discretion in allowing the indictment to be presented against the person charged ; and such discretionary power is undoubtedly useful in preventing the criminal law being made use of by private persons for their own grievances instead of for public offences. For example, though of course a regular system of fraudulent dealings on the part of horsedealers should be criminally indicted, yet persons who fancy that they have been cheated in some one particular case, may endeavour to get the horsedealer within the meshes of the criminal law, when it is only properly a case for damages, and not one of public interest.

In similar cases a grand jury may be advantageously entrusted to throw out the bill of indictment. Again, when the magistrate has refused to commit the accused for trial, the prosecutor may demand to be bound over to prosecute, and on his sending in his bill of indictment to the grand jury, they may practically reverse the decision of the magistrate, and by presenting a true bill to the court, may declare that a *prima facie*

case has been made out. On the other hand, were the discretionary power left to the magistrate (as it is already in the matter of the penalties to be enforced), and if, where that discretion was exercised in dismissing the charge, the prosecutor were still able as now to bind himself to prosecute, and in default of the charge being made out, to be liable to pay damages to the person wrongfully so placed on his trial, the requirements of justice would be sufficiently met, and the grand jury might be dispensed with, though there seems no reason why the distinguished members of that body should not be called upon to permeate the petty juries with their social and educational influence.

The petty jury are the substitutes for the "ordeals" imposed in old days. When once the accusation had been presented by the grand jury, the accused was bound to go through the ordeal of walking over hot ploughshares, or of grasping molten lead; another ordeal was that by water, when the accused if he floated was deemed guilty, if he did not, innocent. It might be a satisfactory method of administering justice at the present time, since it formed a convenient saving of time and expenditure. It has been suggested that originally this water-ordeal was a counterpart of the Japanese system of happy despatch, and that the accuser, on seeing the accused prove his innocence by being drowned, ought to have promptly followed the latter's example by way of apology. No record, however, has ever been found of any such conduct on the part of a prosecutor. The substitution of facing twelve sober countrymen for the above ordeals was decidedly a move in the right direction, and gave both innocent and guilty a fairer chance of escape. The only ordeal by water now known, is when a guilty man sees the jury reduced to tears over the touching details of his innocence, as related by impassioned counsel.

Our meditations are here interrupted by the stentorian announcement of "The Grand Jury! Gentlemen!" proclaimed

by an important official. Some staid landowners appear in a gallery, a long pole is handed up to them to which they fix the bills, these are finally landed by the clerk of the court, who looks on their backs to see whether they are marked true bills or not, and having read them out, nods up to the gentlemen in the gallery, as much as to say "Here we all are, how are you up there?" upon which the foreman and his colleagues vanish rather stiffly to consider some more bills, and business begins at last.

To turn to those for whom all this machinery of justice is put in motion. The criminal alone may be an interesting object, but a confused mass of criminality huddled and hustled together in a dock, like a herd of frightened sheep, or rather goats, offer a decidedly unpleasant aspect of society; they are waiting for their pleas of "guilty" or "not guilty" to be taken, miserable old men, ruffianly youths, slatternly girls, impish rag-muffins, and degraded nondescripts; there they all are before us, at once the cause and effect of misery and crime. It is startling to consider how, apart from the gigantic frauds of fashionable swindlers, the criminal law seems as a rule to be entirely associated with the lower classes, very much as the State Church during the last century appeared to be the monopoly of the upper or comfortable classes. The moral would seem plain enough, however difficult the application, that when once you have exorcised the demons of Ignorance and Poverty by making education and work available for all, you have got rid of the two chief generators of crime.

Yet a qualification must be inserted as regards work, for frequently it is in the relaxation from over-work that men become wanton and brutal; idleness may make a young man mischievous, but it is over-work, or rather want of rational leisure, that deadens the character of full grown men. As to fraud, by far the greater mass of thieving crimes will be found to be committed by the poor and ignorant, though of course

the risk of more refined and dangerous forms of fraud must be incurred as education increases, and civilized society becomes more complex.

But to return to our goats. It is a constant subject of wonder how the unfortunates in the dock, unless they have frequently occupied that position before, can possibly understand the legal phraseology with which the Clerk of Arraigns invariably addresses them. "Not guilty, my lord ; but I'll never do it again," betrays a hazy knowledge of pleading ; or perhaps to an indictment where the intent is the necessary ingredient of the crime, the answer given will be, "Guilty, your honour ; but I hope you'll deal leniently with me, for I was in drink at the time, and never meant to do no harm to the old girl." "That is Not guilty," interrupts the intractable clerk, and the puzzled prisoner is placed on his trial, and with frequent acknowledgments of guilt is compelled to hear the whole ghastly tale of drunken riot disclosed by the bandaged wife to the examining counsel. On the whole there is very little tragic feeling pervading the atmosphere of a criminal court ; every detail is brought out and taken down with such dryness and practicality, that the dramatic aspect of the whole is lost sight of, though now and again as some little child, seemingly without effort, tells a tale of brutal family outrage, and forges link by link the chains of penal servitude for the father, stolidly standing before her in the dock, a strange awe-struck feeling creeps into the hearts of the audience at this hideous outcome of domestic strife, and at the Nemesis which condemns a parent out of the lips of his child. Or again, a thrill of pain shoots through one as from the crowd in court, a woman's shrill cry follows the stern sentence of the judge, and the unhappy husband, with one look round at his fainting wife, is hurried out of sight by the gaolers. Out of sight into those long weary years of imprisonment and slavery ! How will the wife and family ever bear the sudden shock of

this loss of the breadwinner, or her fidelity stand the strain? Often without the means of communication, how can these two sharply divided lives ever hope to meet again, hidden away from each other in the black night of Time?

For the spectators in court the tragedies soon pass out of sight, and imperturbable justice continues its way without a thought of what it has caused. And so it must be, if general laws are ever to be applied to individual cases. Up come the prisoners, one after another, and during all the long day the different characters pass across the stage. The "injured innocent"—for whom the ladies felt such pity, and over whose fate the jury pondered with such care, effecting finally a compromise by finding him guilty with a recommendation to mercy—turns out, from the subsequent consultation with the police-inspector and the county black-book, to have spent most of his life at the country's expense, and vanishes once more out of society, this time for a considerable period, his once pitiful face changing into that of the dogged criminal, while the ladies, to hide their discomfiture, express themselves markedly in favour of his doom, and in the heart of the youthful barrister are sown the first seeds of bitterness and scepticism.

The clever cheat, the burglarious *habitué*, the pilfering clerk, the brute *par excellence*, the country booby—these, and a hundred other types of criminality, pass away to their doom with but few exceptions, for the real criminal seldom escapes, in spite of the ingenuity of Queen's counsellors or the impassioned eloquence of budding Ciceros. Indeed, one can scarcely fail to be struck by the evident unwillingness of both Bench and Bar that any legal technicality should really parry the straight stroke of justice, though sometimes a criminally-minded man may escape owing to the cumbrousness of the criminal law itself. Even that much-abused body, the British jury, exhibit, on the whole, an evident incredulity towards the forensic fervour of self-assertive juniors and towards the rhetorical or jocular

bunkum in which members of "the old school" still think fit to indulge. Whether the juryman's educational or experimental faculties have been enlarged, or whether a sceptical state of mind is the general outcome of the age, it is certainly a fact that the modern juryman in criminal cases is not a bird to be caught by chaff without any grain. In civil cases, undoubtedly, it is different ; for there the issues are not so distinct, and the juryman's view is more apt to become fogged when damages and not imprisonment are the result of his lucubrations.

Probably, in the course of the day, the question as to admitting the prisoner's own statement of events will arise. Is he to be allowed to give his own account of his conduct after his counsel's address, or is his counsel to bring before the court his client's story under the thin veil of hypothetical explanations of the occurrence ?—though of course, when the prisoner is undefended by counsel, he can make any statement he chooses. The present prevalence of this question would appear to be the outward sign of an inward change of view on the part of the public towards accused individuals. If the maxim of "everybody is innocent until he is proved guilty" were still felt in its full force, it were far better for the prisoner to leave his counsel free to suggest a hundred suppositions to account for the crime, since he has only the one particular story set up by the prosecution to refute. But if, as is really the case, Charles Reade and society begin to feel that the accused ought to give some account of himself, and explain the very fact of his being accused, instead of merely rebutting others' reasonable presumptions, then certainly it is better to face the matter boldly, and either to allow counsel to lay explanations before the jury which he has admittedly received from the prisoner, or else leave the prisoner himself to address the jury before his counsel, his statement being received as evidence by the jury for what it is worth, and by the counsel as the basis of his defence. There is no need to put the prisoner upon his oath ; for the criminality

of perjury is overshadowed by the serious position in which he is placed ; and it is the rationality, not the truthfulness, of his explanation which will affect the defence. Possibly the liberty of cross-examining the prisoner should be ensured, but it ought to be sparingly used, and the prisoner's verbal statement be placed very much on a par with his statements to the police on being charged. After all, the popular desire for the prisoner's account of himself is an advance on former principles, which were based solely on the desire for an impartial trial. Now that that is secured the aim is felt to be "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth," as to which no one can give a clearer idea than the accused, not in what he says, but in the way he says it.

But the Assize is drawing to its close ; the court is suffused with that oppressively muggy atmosphere so common to the haunts of justice ; and the youthful barrister, whose wig is still hot and irksome, begins hazily to wonder why the judge is called a justice "in air." With a struggle, however, he recovers some shadow of a briefless mind, and as the result of his meditations formulates the following points for consideration : Why do we wear wigs which are but the relics of an artificial fashion long since discarded by all classes except State coachmen ? Why all this laborious pomp about cases which any man with a balanced mind and moderate legal knowledge could easily preside over and direct without any loss of dignity or waste of judicial force ? And last, but far from least, how can all this mass of criminality be permanently broken up and its efforts be elsewhere directed and utilized ? Meanwhile, though the questions meet with no immediate answer, the law creeps on, and just as the hands on even the quaintest face of the oldest Dutch clock tell the hour truly, so justice, in however quaint a fashion, is done at last.

SPENCER L. HOLLAND.

Dorsetshire Ghosts.

DORSETSHIRE is, in our day, the best-studied county in England. Not only has Mr. Barnes turned the real life of Dorset cottages and hayfields into his pretty *patois* verse, but Mr. Thomas Hardy has admitted us into the intimacy of the Dorsetshire labourer, and made us stand, delighted at the rustic's quaintness rendered by the novelist's exquisite humour, in the midst of the groups at sheep-shearing and ale-drinking. And Mr. Blackmore has made rustic Nature, if not rustic man, in the neighbouring New Forest the subject of his observant study. Nevertheless, we have not been told much about Dorset Ghosts, though Mr. Barnes has many a stanza upon Dorset fairies; and the supernatural visitants who trouble the prosaic county of salt butter should have their record before they die finally out of the province. Already their numbers have decreased. "I don't know how 'tis," said one old woman, with a gloomy shake of her head, "but ghostses isn't so common now as when I was a girl." And they will get less and less common.

Still the genuineness of ghosts is taken for granted by all true "Darsets," who add, however, as a saving clause, that the power of seeing ghosts—*i.e.*, a species of *clairvoyance*, is not given to every one. In one case, where an old married couple gave the writer their account of a haunted house in which they had both lived as servants, the husband said they had more than once been together in the room with the ghost; and he had *seen* it, while his wife could only hear it. He explained this by saying that she was denied the power, and added, with some personal pride, that such visional faculty was possessed by comparatively few. Though they are certain of the existence of such things, they are much perplexed as to

what ghosts, really are. One person remarked, after telling a strange tale, "I never knows what they be ; because if they was spirits gone to heaven they wouldn't *want* to come back ; and if they was gone to t'other place they wouldn't be *let* come back !" The only satisfactory solution which even the Dorsetshire Protestant ever finds is that, for some unexplained reason, a spirit occasionally has a period of wandering upon earth "before it is finally accepted for either place."

It is difficult to say how some of these stories originate, as it is very rare to meet a person who has been the first to see a ghost ; so much is repeated that rests solely on tradition, passed on and added to by successive generations. Probably some one observes a curious or unusual shadow ; it may be an animal in an odd position or place ; possibly a person may be there for some uncommon reason—good, bad, or indifferent ; from such a small and unlikely beginning, repetition and exaggeration will evolve the marvellous tale. A murder or suicide is almost sure to give a place the reputation of being haunted. A sudden death, too, is another probable commencement. In daylight the rustics have very little fear of a haunted spot, and none whatever of a churchyard ; but after dark they will avoid both. Nor are they easily induced to enter a church without companionship after nightfall, whether the building be old or new. No one is asked to accept as historic the stories which are here given—it is believed for the first time. All of them have been recently told to the writer by the people themselves.

At a farm in the parish of Holt, there is a room situated over the dairy, and appropriated to the use of one or two of the farm lads as a sleeping apartment. In this room, heavy footsteps are heard ascending the stairs ; the bedclothes are turned back, and the terror-struck occupant sees himself the cynosure of a pair of huge glistening eyes—"as big as basins." He then loses sight of them, and hears the footsteps descend. If

he has the courage to go and look down the stairs he may be rewarded by another terrible stare from the eyes, which then vanish into silence and darkness. A barn about a quarter of a mile from this spot in the same parish is also vaguely spoken of as haunted. Indeed, barns seem to have a faculty for becoming haunted. There is one, about a mile out of Wimborne, on the Cranborne-road, called "Sunday's Barn," where a man once committed suicide by hanging himself. Ever since, there has been talk of the apparition of a coffin lying across the road, opposite the building. At Hill-butts and Stanbridge, also near Wimborne, are two barns, to both of which this unenviable notoriety belongs. No cattle, it is added, can or will stay there on account of the horrible noises they hear.

Haunted houses are almost too common to be worth noticing. Most villages have at least one such house. It is the exception if anything ghostly is ever seen in them ; strange noises being the usual attributes of these disturbed dwelling-places. People avoid taking them, and those who by force of circumstances are compelled to live in them are sincerely pitied by their neighbours. Occasionally, too, a belief arises that a church or chapel is haunted. The church at Hampreston, near Wimborne, is regarded with some superstitious dread, because on certain nights of the year it is illuminated inside "by a brilliant white light." Probably the origin of this weird reputation may be traced to some peculiar reflection of the moon, or the not unfrequent escape, under certain conditions of soil and atmosphere, of a luminous gas from a buried body. This is the phenomenon known either as "grave-lights," or "corpse candles." During the recent erection of a chapel at Haythorne, the idea was suddenly started that the evil one had entered and taken possession of the building. For some two or three weeks he could not be dislodged. But this was at length accomplished by a number of persons who collected outside, and sang and hooted at the top of their voices. It

may be added that noise is generally considered a powerful element in subduing such unwelcome visitors from a worse world. This happened within only the last two years.

It is curious to note how frequently the "headless figure" appears in such tales. The "Headless Horseman," is a familiar object to the readers of all old legends and ballads, and this similarity of fancy is explicable in more ways than one. It will be remembered that execution was formerly performed by decapitation; consequently, if the spirit of any one thus punished haunts the earth, it is most probable that it would take this ghastly form. Then, too, a headless figure is felt to be so distinctively and conclusively supernatural.

There is a gate at Kinson, near Bournemouth, carefully avoided after dark, as a figure holding its head under its arm is believed to be its nightly occupant. One of the roads between Poole and Lytchett is also regarded with much horror, because a coffin, carried by four headless men, is reported to have been seen there many times. It is conveyed down the road some distance, and disappears through the hedge. At Kingston Russell House, near Bridport, a coach drawn by four headless horses, driven by a headless coachman and footman, and containing inside four headless passengers, is supposed, on certain nights of the year, to drive up to the door, stay a moment, and drive back again.

A spirit form, white, cloudlike and shapeless, is said to have been seen near the church at Stanbridge, before mentioned. This floats along the road for about two hundred yards, perches itself on the churchyard wicket, and finally vanishes unaccountably. The same form of apparition troubles Gravel Hill, near Poole.

A few years ago a man was accidentally killed on the Merley crossing of the South Western Railway. The spot is now haunted by his spirit; because, say some of the unfortunate man's acquaintance, he had boasted, just before his death, that

he had seen the devil, and that “the old gentleman was his first cousin.” In consequence of this profanity, he cannot go to heaven ; and the devil will not have him. So, like the wandering Jew, his spirit is one of those “wanderers o’er eternity, whose bark drives on and on, and anchored ne’er shall be.”

In Dorsetshire, little if any superstition attaches to Hallow e’en, the night still sacred to the departed in Scotland and the North of England. Old Christmas Eve is regarded as a day favoured by connection with the supernatural ; and it is said that the cows and sheep, whether in the field or shed, go on their knees, and low gently at the sound of the stroke of twelve o’clock. This idea is common to many countries, and has its origin, of course, in the traditional presence of cattle in the Bethlehem stable.

The night to be really dreaded, a Dorset rustic thinks, is Midsummer night. Any one who is anxious to see spirits in a visible form, can do so then, provided he will conform to one or two conditions. He should go about eleven o’clock to the nearest church porch. It is not a *sine quā non* that he goes alone ; but if he is in company, he must observe the strictest silence ; and it is desirable that he should not even look at his companion. As midnight approaches he will find himself gradually deprived of all power to rise or move. When twelve o’clock strikes, the churchyard will suddenly become filled with spirits, including those of every one he ever knew, whether alive or dead. They will pass him in a long, slow procession into the church, where they will remain for some time ; but as the door will be closed, and himself unable to stir, he must be satisfied without knowing what their sacred rites may be. As they leave the building, the spirits of the dead will come first ; while the spirits of those who are destined to die in the course of the year will not quit the church at all. Those to whom any illness or great trouble is going to happen

during the next twelve months, will come very slowly at the last ; and the worse the calamity to fall upon them, the slower they will come. This legendary awe of the shortest and most beautiful night in the year comes to England from that North where the mysterious sun blazes at midnight. There is little poetry and little superstition about the Midsummer's night of the South.

Bagley House, near Bridport, has very gloomy legends attaching to it. Tradition (for the stories are traced back to the last century) says that Squire Lighte, who then owned the place, had been hunting one day, and after reaching home had gone away again and drowned himself. His groom had followed him with a presentiment that something was wrong, and arrived at the pond in time to see the end of the tragedy. As he returned, he was accosted by the spirit of his drowned master, which unhorsed him. He soon fell violently ill, and never recovered, one of the consequences of this illness being that his skin peeled entirely off ! Shortly after Squire Lighte's suicide his old house was troubled by noisy disturbances which were at once associated with the evil deed of self-destruction. It was suggested that the spirit should be formally and duly "laid" or exorcised. A number of the clergy went therefore for that purpose, and succeeded in inducing the ghost to confine itself to a chimney in the house for a certain number of years—it is not known exactly now for how long. For many years after this, however, the place remained at peace ; but on the expiration of the power of the charm, very much worse disturbances broke out again. Raps would be heard at the front door ; steps in the passages and on the stairs ; doors opening and closing. The rustle of ladies dressed in silk was audible in the drawing-room, and from that room the sound was traced into a summer-house in the garden. The crockery would all be violently moved, and at certain rare intervals a male figure, dressed in old-fashioned costume, is said to have

made itself visible, and walked about the house. The neighbours say that these extraordinary occurrences continued for many years. They believe in them most firmly, and are of opinion that as long as the house stands, it will be thus troubled. An element worthy of notice in this story is the time-honoured faith in the power of the clergy over evil spirits.

The high road from Wimborne to Cranborne passes through one of the woods on the St. Giles' estate. By the roadside are four or five magnificent fir-trees, which give the spot a gloomy, shadowy appearance, making it in all respects a fit resort for ghosts. There is a form which haunts this place. They say it is that of a female figure dressed in white, and wearing a hood which covers her face. She paces to and fro, but as soon as one succeeds in coming near her, she makes a wild rush through the hedge. After this there is a crashing sound, like a waggon and horses going fast through a wood, which continues for some minutes. The popular belief is that a murder was committed there in bygone years.

Other samples of this love of the marvellous might easily be adduced ; these will suffice now. If, sometimes, those who are nervous and unduly credulous are sorely tried, in other cases superstition is not without its advantages. Even the most hardened boy-robber of birds'-nests shrinks from touching a robin's egg. He is brought up to believe that the sure penalty for this kind of cruelty is that his fingers will become crooked. Some attach the same punishment to taking wrens' nests. It is not as a rule, however, that superstition comes to the rescue of animals.

Dorsetshire people believe firmly in dreams. One man who lost two children a few years ago, actually found himself a local celebrity, on the strength of stating that he had seen, in a dream, his two children in heaven sitting on little wooden stools ! People flattered his vanity by coming miles to hear the relation of this dream ; till at last he felt, as it were,

commissioned to go into the neighbouring villages and preach his vision. After this, no one will be surprised to hear that the Dorset rustic trusts Zadkiel's and Moore's prophetic almanacs with the most implicit faith.

These Dorset tales cannot claim much distinct originality, nor do they arouse great horror ; but they resemble the people who believe them, at least in their simplicity. In the matter of superstition, a true "Dorset" compares well with his neighbours in Wilts and Somerset. Belief in witchcraft and charms has not disappeared from these counties ; but in Dorset it is rare. Dorset shows, moreover, among other counties, the best reports under the Vagrancy Acts. Poverty exists everywhere but there is no excessive amount of it here. The statistics of crime, also, compare most favourably with those of other places. Though the railway intersects the county, though few farms have not their steam engine, and though making the once famous Dorset butter now pays less well than sending the milk direct to town, the lover of the simple characteristics of the country will find as many traces of the past in Dorset as in any other county in the land.

M. F. BILLINGTON.

A Gift of Interpretation.

SOME of the art of all times—and very much of the art of this critical age of ours—lies in that admiring and sympathetic work of interpreting the creations of others which calls upon our responsive and sensitive rather than upon our independent powers. Now more than ever do our artists “live by admiration,” in a sense perhaps more definite and emphatic than Wordsworth intended; and our actors of the dramas and players of the music of others are so honoured that in the common little green-room vocabulary we give them a creative rank. Their gift, however, is distinctively the gift of interpretation; and the fact that it is so rife and so important in our day may perhaps be taken as another sign of those times of which Buffon’s words apply, “les races se féminisent.”

In a recent article it was shown how much labour—some of it actually lost, and most of it lost so far as public recognition goes—is involved in the production of a great picture. And who can say that the crowd which forgets its homage to the “long patience” as it rushes through a Royal Academy, is not equally blind, when it opens at home at ease the latest illustrated book of romance or of rhyme,—blind to the toil undergone by the author before he made his intentions clear to his artist, and by the artist before he satisfied himself with the fidelity of his interpretation of the author? And yet the interpreter has never been so important as now, since the days when the dread sentence upon the wall was expounded. His labour is grave and humble. It lends and does not refuse; and it is full of that respect of man towards man which produces lovely art and thought. If we take but one instance—that of a celebrated author, the illustrations of whose works are

as well known as the works themselves—the relations between creator and interpreter will be readily understood.

Charles Dickens chose always to be an illustrated writer. The most vivid, positive and dramatic of authors—a genius who saw mentally with an intensity of realization expressed and paralleled by the vivacity and directness of his eyes, he yet surrendered habitually to others the privilege of giving to his imaginations that which they possessed supremely in his own brain—form. He seldom made the complaints of Thackeray, who clung long to the delusion that his hand was able to express the character, or form, or beauty of his mental images, who was wont—if report speaks true—to “work upon” Fred. Walker’s blocks for the earlier numbers of “Philip” when he abandoned illustrating his own story, and who laments, somewhere in the pages of that same book, that his artist had failed to embody his conception of the large-hearted young man who made light of dowagers and would tap a bishop on the waistcoat with a *camaraderie* which knew no awe. Perhaps it was because no one else saw very clearly the beauty of the character that poor Philip was difficult to render. The persistence, however, with which Thackeray tried and tried again to do better for his own thoughts than others could do shows how dissatisfied he was with his illustrators, so that probably no composer misinterpreted by an indocile singer, no dramatist obliged to express himself through a refractory actress, and, if we may believe Mr. Sludge, no well-educated spirit forced to dispense with the h’s dropped by his medium, ever felt more aggrieved than Thackeray at the shortcomings of interpretation. Dickens, as we have said, went with content and acquiescence through such variations as are expressed in the different moods of Seymour, Stanfield, Doyle, Cruikshank, Cattermole, Leech, Tenniel, “Phiz”—in his two distinct periods—Frank Stone, Marcus Stone, and last, but not least, Luke Fildes.

The present generation may naturally know little of Seymour. He was a caricaturist of George IV. ; and though the humour of his work suffers in our eyes from change of taste and manners, he was certainly a caricaturist of power. He was fond of gardening, and pursued it in the amateur fashion which, if it affords the most pleasure, produces also the most failure. Meditating one day upon some particularly absurd horticultural blunder of his own, he decided that a series of comic sketches of the amateur gardener and his troubles would be a good undertaking. But the incompetent gardener eventually gave way, as a subject for illustration, to the incapable sportsman—a less happy and decidedly less fresh idea—and this was the origin of Winkle and the Pickwick Club. That this Pickwick was not the Pickwick of the immortal book we know on Dickens's own emphatic testimony ; but it was the seed which eventually blossomed into that benevolent flower. Into the controversy between the artist and the author we need not enter. There was assertion and there was counter-assertion. The fact, however, that Charles Dickens did not " write up" to the sketches, but took the characters entirely into his own hands, as soon as he had accepted Seymour's idea of the club, is confirmed by a letter to the artist, in which he gives him minute directions as to the execution of one of the plates—a letter which does not appear in Forster's biography (nor in the subsequently published letters), but which would have strengthened Forster's case for his friend. Charles Dickens suggests alterations to Seymour, with only the apology which any courteous author would make for increasing the labours of his illustrator. The two never met but once, and therefore were not associated as friends.

To his other artists the novelist was much attached. Cruikshank was his comrade, not only in their work in common, but in Charles Dickens's beloved avocation (we are putting this word to its right use), of acting ; and both Maclise and

Hablot K. Browne were his companions and his fellow-observers in his rambles in search of materials. Perhaps it was Mr. Browne, among all the Dickens draughtsmen, who was the most inseparably associated with the author and his work—he was more so than Cattermole, and more so than Cruikshank. Seymour's death by his own hand, in a moment of insanity, immediately after he had made the designs for the second number of "Pickwick," and before the publication of that number, necessitated the choice of a new artist. It was then that Thackeray offered himself, and it was then also that "Phiz" was chosen. The decision was quick, but most felicitous, like that which fixes some rash-seeming marriage on short acquaintance. Dickens and Mr. Browne had much in common, which no doubt their early and close connection developed. They had, indeed, done a little previous work together in an anti-fanatical pamphlet : "Sunday under Three Heads," published by Chapman & Hall, and long since out of print. The artist modified himself considerably as time went on. The modern reader may wish that the people in "Pickwick" were a little less like imps and demons ; nevertheless, the one or two later attempts at prettiness and elegance with which the book was interleaved, might as well have been omitted, as the old ugliness and impishness were best left alone. In "Martin Chuzzlewit" the sympathy, intelligence and appreciation are beyond rivalry and beyond praise.

Nothing, perhaps, shows the sudden and great increase of the love of beauty in England so much as the present intolerance of the unrelieved grotesque. There is not one of our caricaturists, from Mr. du Maurier, the most charming draughtsman of his time, downwards, who does not mingle some beauty with his comedy. Therefore, the unmitigated and violent grotesqueness of "Phiz" in his first manner is a shock to some of our sensibilities—the more so, no doubt, that the comedy is less keenly comic to us now than it was to the artist's earlier con-

temporaries. The sense of humour alters fast ; much of Dickens—the ineptitudes of Bob Sawyer and his friends for instance—raises but a forced smile, and the fun of the designs has waned with that of the text ; but where the conception has stood the test of time and change the illustration looks immortal. Nothing could possibly surpass "Phiz's" Pecksniff, for example ; and the exquisiteness of the interpretation extends to the portrait by Spiller and the bust by Spoker. When author and artist are both at their best they seem to be more completely in union than at any other moment. It is not at such times, of course, that the utter absence of any feeling for beauty, and for what we may call high-breeding of type, is sensibly apparent ; but rather in those moments when the prettiness at which the author aimed now and then, received the interpretation of Cruikshank's bald-faced and wasp-waisted feminine ideal, or of Cattermole's insipid attempts at a child-like figure.

Dickens and his group of early illustrators lived in a time which was not so much a coarse age as—to use a woman's word—a dowdy age. There was a distinctly middle-class flavour about all the stages, ranks and phases of life. Men dined at taverns, and took their recreation among the singers of songs at convivial meetings ; they were not, perhaps, coarser in feeling than the present generation, but they were decidedly without a certain conventional finish and fastidiousness—now almost universal. When the art of that day aimed at beauty it was with an invariable *maladresse* and inelegance. When it caricatured low life, or the uglier strata of the middle-class, when it was designedly and deeply *embourgeoise*, it did its work with an indubitable power—the power of exaggeration, however, not of realism. Dickens's whole literary attitude was, in its turn, correspondingly exaggerated. The strain and stress may have been sincere enough, for it was a confirmed and unrelaxed habit ; but it increased with his age, and was

even more apparent in his personal correspondence than in his books. All the character attempted in the art of his time had the insistence, if not always the power, of Hogarth ; and insistence without power is one of the most futile of things. Yet Dickens himself was almost always strong, however strained.

Art in England was unquestionably at a low ebb in the days when Charles Dickens was in full career. He himself cannot have been in any technical sense educated in art. His observant powers were such, however, that he could not fail to be a good critic of the nature in a picture. If art and nature were the same thing, the eye which saw so vividly and so well the marshes of "Great Expectations," and the storm-scene in "Edwin Drood," and which noted turns of manner and tricks of face with the subtlety and watchfulness of the eye of a child, would have needed no education. As it was, the pleasure he felt in the illustrative interpretation which others gave to his work was not evoked in too facile a manner. He was wont to give his artists details, of a specially emphatic kind, when he sent them the passages of his MSS. or proofs for illustration. His manner of description justifies us in the comparison of his mental seeing power with that of a child. In the experience of most of us, the first impressions gathered from literature are pictorial in the positive and explicit sense ; listening to the first fairy-tales told us, or read to us, we make mental pictures of such definiteness that the physical arrangement, the right-hand or left-hand position of objects and persons' have to be decided before the mind is content. The image of the scene is always positive and distinct. As years increase this faculty is slowly lost ; the mind becomes more literary and less objective ; material things are left vague, and thoughts become more important ; also the habit of much unenjoyed or half-enjoyed reading of an idle kind produces a mental sloth which will not take the trouble so instinctive and ready in the child. Now Dickens very evidently preserved the pictorial habit, which

means, not that he had the capacity of a painter—for we are dealing with mental things only—but that he imagined with extraordinary precision, and caused the same imagination in others, and especially in his illustrators. Here must lie the reason of his common contentment with their work—for so definite a fancy might otherwise have been disappointed and irritated by any deviation from its own pictures. Dickens must have spoken so distinctly that such deviations were rare; and, indeed, few men have been richer than he in the power of impressing his impressions upon others. He writes to George Cattermole, who was illustrating “The Old Curiosity Shop:” “I cannot tell you how much I am obliged to you for altering the child, or how much I hope that my wish in that respect didn’t go greatly against the grain.” With regard to “Barnaby Rudge,” he writes to the same artist: “I wonder whether you feel ravens in general, and would fancy Barnaby’s raven in particular. I have been studying my bird, and think I could make a very queer character of him.” It was to Cattermole that he addressed the warmest of those praises which he dispensed so heartily, telling him that his drawings gratified the author’s inmost heart. But he was almost as cordial to Mr. Frith, who painted him a Dolly Varden and a Kate Nickleby; and his admiration of Maclise’s work extended to those curious designs, at once heartless and effeminate, academic and invertebrate, with which an edition of Moore’s “Irish Melodies” was illustrated by the once famous Irish painter. Yet the two artists whom a later taste must consider as among the best of his early illustrators—Leech and Mr. Richard Doyle—are precisely those with whose works he, at least once, found reluctant fault. “One cut of Doyle’s and one of Leech’s,” he writes to his wife during the preparation of “The Chimes,” “I found so unlike my ideas, that I had them both to breakfast with me this morning, and, with that winning manner that you know of, got them, with the highest good humour, to do both afresh.

They are now hard at it. Stanfield's delight and wonder at my being pleased with what he has done is delicious. Mac's frontispiece is charming."

The reader is aware that many of Dickens's books—"The Old Curiosity Shop," "Barnaby Rudge," "The Battle of Life," "The Chimes," among the number—were illustrated by several hands. In "The Battle of Life," for instance, we have some bits of landscape treated by Stanfield, the comic characters by Leech, and the sentimental by Maclise; (who that has seen them can forget the two sisters dancing in the orchard, and the more than Michael-Angelesque twist of their astonishing figures?); and the idea of such distribution is no doubt a happy one, susceptible, under other conditions, of very successful realization. Frank Stone, Mr. Tenniel, John Leech, and others, illustrated "The Haunted Man," the author's greatest favour falling, in this instance, on the drawings of Frank Stone. He gave him the heroine, and writes to him:—"We are unanimous. The drawing of Milly on the chair is charming. I cannot tell you how much the little composition and expression please me. . . . You will really, pictorially, make the little woman I love. . . . I know how pretty she will be, with the children, in your hands, and should be a stupendous jackass if I had any distrust of it."

But, after all, the best art of the day was at Dickens's disposal; and to have been ill-content would have argued a quite exceptional art-culture, which no one claims for him. It is more interesting than surprising to find that the only recorded instance of his refusing the services of an artist (needless to say there must have been many instances unrecorded) seems to have been his rejection of Thackeray, in the days when the latter had his artistic delusion so strongly upon him that he purposed to make his career with the pencil and not with the pen. "I can remember," said the author of *Vanity Fair*, at a Royal Academy dinner, many years later, "when Mr. Dickens

was quite a young man, and had commenced delighting the world with some charming humorous works in covers which were coloured light green, and came out once a month, that this young man wanted an artist to illustrate his writings ; and I recollect walking up to his chambers in Furnival's Inn, with two or three drawings in my hand, which, strange to say, he did not find suitable. But for the unfortunate blight," the speaker added, quaintly and gracefully, "which came over my artistic existence, it would have been my pride and my pleasure to have endeavoured one day to find a place on these walls for one of my performances." Thackeray succeeded in pleasing himself better than in contenting a brother author, or his own readers, who are obliged to cover with their hands some of the cuts for *Vanity Fair*, lest the pictorial version should mar the sweet, or charming, or quaint description. He was wont, however, to refer to his ill-success with Dickens as "Mr. Pickwick's lucky escape."

It is from Thackeray, by the way, that we have enthusiastic testimony to that portrait of Charles Dickens by Maclise which is well known by reproductions—the seated figure of the author of twenty-seven, with beardless face turned over the shoulder, and the indefinable air of effeminacy given by masses of hair swept from the forehead and falling over the left cheek, by the rolling collar of the coat, and by sleeves so disposed, sartorially, as to make the shoulders appear to droop after the fashion of the Medicean Venus. It is difficult to judge how much should be allowed for Maclise's manner and for the ideal of the time, in this portrait. Thackeray said, writing in a *Fraser's Magazine* of that day his comments on the Royal Academy :—

"As a likeness it is perfectly amazing. A looking-glass could not render a better facsimile. Here we have the real identical man Dickens ; the artist must have understood the inward Boz, as well as the outward, before he made this admirable representation of him. What cheerful intellectuality there is about the man's eyes and large forehead ! The mouth is too large and full, too eager and active, perhaps ; the smile is very sweet and generous. If

Monsieur de Balzac, that voluminous physiognomist, could examine this head, he would, no doubt, interpret every line and wrinkle in it—the nose firm and well placed, the nostrils wide and full, as are the nostrils of all men of genius—(this is Monsieur de Balzac's maxim). 'The past and the future,' says Jean Paul, 'are written in every countenance.' I think we may promise ourselves a brilliant future for this one."

It is of course obvious enough that in this sentence Thackeray has let his thoughts stray, and is praising the living face of his friend rather than the portrait, which to us would appear to be wanting in the fire and impulse of expression all testimony unites in attributing to Dickens as the most striking peculiarity of his face. Ary Scheffer's portrait of the author was even more characteristic of the artist, and less so of the subject, than we can suppose Maclise's to have been. That it was not very like, however, was not owing to any lack of painstaking on Ary Scheffer's part. He and his brother painted Charles Dickens simultaneously in Paris, for about four months! "And the crowning feature is," writes Dickens himself, "that I do not discern the slightest resemblance, either in his portrait or his brother's. . . . Scheffer finished yesterday, and Collins, who has a good eye for pictures, says there is no man living who could do the painting about the eyes. As a work of art, I see in it spirit combined with perfect ease, and yet I don't see myself." As for D'Orsay's profile sketch, with its ringlets, it is a monument of the astounding taste of 1841, if of nothing else. The Captain Bobadil (from "Every Man in his Humour"), by Leslie, has always seemed to us to possess an indefinable family air—the subtle character which ran through the features of Dickens and his brothers—and the family expression, both in the face and in the action of the hand. It had the Dickens movement and the Dickens look.

The novelist's two last illustrators—Mr. Marcus Stone and Mr. Luke Fildes—are the only two of his many contemporary interpreters who are working actively in the younger ranks of oil-painters now. Mr. Richard Doyle, indeed, is still at his

pleasant and memorable labours, and the youngest of our great London galleries is honoured by being permitted to show the play of a fancy which can never grow old; and Mr. Tenniel, in black and white, is more vigorous now than in earlier days.

Dickens's affection for Frank Stone was continued to his son. When a very young man, Mr. Marcus Stone was suddenly loaded with the responsibilities of life, and began to turn the taste and pleasure of his first years to practical account. Dickens's appeals to his publishers to employ the young designer bore little fruit; but in 1862, and in the two following years, Charles Dickens himself had work to give him. Illustrated editions of the "Child's History of England" (a copy of which the author had sent to the artist when the latter had, as a boy, made a sketch of Jo in "Bleak House"), of "Great Expectations," and of "Our Mutual Friend," were entrusted to Mr. Marcus Stone—the drawings being unequal, but deserving of a more favourable character than that which the artist himself gives them as "boy's work." And although he did far maturer work for Mr. Anthony Trollope's novel, "He Knew He Was Right," and afterwards made a genuine success by his illustrations to "Young Brown," in the *Cornhill Magazine*, yet even his cruder and more tentative drawings had the merit of a kind of diligence and care unusual in the black-and-white work of the time. Mr. Marcus Stone always drew from the model, even for his slighter designs, and this was not the general practice in those days. Mr. Forster has recorded, by the way, that to Mr. Marcus Stone's alertness in observing one of those odd passages of real life which Charles Dickens loved, was owing the introduction of the personality and industry of Mr. Venus, preserver of animals and birds and articulator of human bones. "Marcus came to tell me," writes Dickens, "of an extraordinary trade he had found out, through one of his painting requirements. I immediately went with

him to St. Giles's to look at the place, and found—what you will see." The more serious vocation of painting, however, soon occupied the entire attention of Mr. Marcus Stone.

Of Mr. Luke Fildes's work for Dickens, we have, of course, only the drawings for the fragment of one memorable book. In these designs the young artist brought the work of interpreting Dickens into the modern world of realism by a sudden and complete movement. The literary genius which had found sympathetic presentation in the impish wilfulness of Hablot Browne, now found another presentation, equally responsive, in the direct, open and straight sincerity of a young disciple of the great new school of naturalism. Mr. Fildes's Durdles did not depend for its effectiveness upon the rollicking insistence and over-acting of the illustrative interpreter of Jingle; but that figure stands in the full light of truth and of the humour of Nature. To this freshness of intelligence Mr. Fildes added a freshness of drawing from the life to which his earlier predecessors never even desired to lay claim. How ill a careful study from models would have accorded with the contortions and twists and chronic bodily grimaces of the figures drawn by the "Phiz" of the earlier days!

In choosing to be so invariably an illustrated author, Dickens proved his own instinct of emphatic self-assertion in art—an instinct which prompted him to take the first glance of the people, to compel their attention, and to insist upon their laughter by all and any means—whether by persistent iteration, caricature, or his own true and constraining humour. He knew how to produce himself, and such knowledge was part of his legitimate power, part of his completeness. He was almost always effectual, but whether effectual or not he resolved to be effective; and to this end he helped his own imaginative gift by that gift of interpretation which, exercised by others, he himself yet stimulated and controlled.

FRANCIS PHILLIMORE.

A Face in the Window.

I.

IT was late afternoon of a fair March day, instinct with an eager sweetness, like a girl's caress, seeking to make amends for the caprice of her moods.

In a large room, on the ground floor of a house situated in a suburb of London, to which the metropolis had not yet grown, and which still indulged in the surprises of orchards and cabbage fields, a young man was sitting at a table covered with the paraphernalia of measuring instruments and writing and drawing materials. The ceiling of this apartment was cobwebby ; its walls and floor had a plaster-bespattered appearance ; through the open window could be seen a space of grass, worn in patches, and whitely stained with mortar. Under two leafless trees (majestically depressed in their surroundings, as exiled refugees) planks were gathered in a heap, and some hens pecked the earth. The open-air scene was alive with thin lights and shadows, over which reigned a Sunday quiet, yet it was not Sunday. The quiet was that of a world gone out on a holiday. It was the afternoon of the Prince of Wales' wedding-day.

The occupant of the room was a young man of about twenty-two, short and compact of figure. His dark shock of close-cut hair thickly covered a shapely and massive head ; the square-tipped nose was broad-nostrilled, the chin round as a bullet ; from under the straight and energetic brows the hazel eyes, which looked vaguely out on the shabby grass-plot, had a shrewd and balanced expression, contrasting with that of the full lips, which belonged to the super-emotional order. The young man's air was at once dreamy and blunt ; in his expression were

curiously blended the collie dog's sagacity and woman's sensitiveness.

He did not hear the click of the lock before the door turned slowly on its hinges, and there stood revealed in the aperture a grizzled head and a pair of broad shoulders. The wrinkled face was lit by a pair of bright dark eyes, in which dwelt a remote fearfulness, seemingly habitual to them. After a moment's pause half in and half out of the room, the owner, deciding upon entering, revealed to fuller view a portly man's figure, who advanced with a shambling gait.

It was not until he had laid a broad-knuckled hand on the young fellow's shoulder, and said, with a rhythmic burr, "Well, Jimmy, lad, and what are ye thinking of sae soberly?" that the latter looked up with a swift glance, that softened into an amused affectionateness, on meeting that of the intruder.

"Well, uncle, there you are as usual, walking about silent as a ghost," he responded, with an echo of the northern burr in his tone.

"Nay, Jimmy, lad ; it was ye who were in a brown study. I doubt if ye'd have heard if the cannons had gone off in a salute at your ears. Come, come, lad ; it's nae good for you to sit moping by yourself, and feeling as if all the world had gone off a pleasure-seeking and left you out in the cold."

"Well, I almost think I have been asleep," answered the youth, rousing himself. "I have been having a dream—I was seeing grey, stucco-built, pseudo-classic London, lovely as Ghent, or some of those old Flemish towns I had a sight of last autumn, all red bricks, and overhanging balconies, and gabled roofs—every house a picture, with a history to it ; and the sun was streaming down, and the green trees rustling, and in the centre was the loveliest house of all, and a beautiful girl was in it."

"Eh, lad, ye're just feeling a bit dull, so yer thoughts go

wishing things were different, but ye see," the old man said, with a flurried glimmer in his eyes, and rubbing his grey chin with the first joint of his forefinger, "it's best to stick to the slow and sure way; there's nae danger when the way's slow and sure. Put on your hat and go out into the crowd," he went on in a rousing tone, as Jim made a movement of impatience, "and see the brave sights and all the town in a blaze, because the Prince and his sweetheart ha' become man and wife; it'll put the spirit into you. Who knows, it'll bring you luck. Ye may meet your sweetheart in the crowd to-night."

"That's a canny argument," replied Jim, rising, with a forlorn sort of laugh. "Why," he said, putting his two hands on the old man's shoulders, and looking into the shyly laughing eyes, "Who would have thought the builder of Chertney is a poet—that his thoughts are all of sweethearts, instead of running on mortar and planks?"

A few moments later, Jim set forth. He had been nearly a year apprenticed to his uncle, Mr. Simon Stewart, a builder, who possessed a good deal of land. The routine temperament of the old man filled the young one with impatient *ennui*, and it was as a means of guarding himself from hurting one whose widowed and childless lot appealed to him, and in whose simple nature he delighted, that he had adopted towards his a tone of exaggerated banter. Mr. Stewart had left Argellie elder forty years before, and had ever since been connected with the building trade. His affairs had prospered. He had a certain limpet adhesiveness of nature allied to the native canniness of the Scot. When he had formed a plan, he stuck to it, but he showed no initiative for its development. It was not a scheme but an instinct that he followed, when he began to save his money, pence by pence, as a lad, and while still an apprentice invested his savings in buying land in a quarter sufficiently remote from London to be neither town nor country. He had gone on, when his affairs prospered, still buying ground on

which stood decayed buildings, dreary, tumbled-down habitations, turnip fields, and green spaces. He was erecting rows of stucco houses, of a monotonous architecture; two pillars invariably supported a portico, reached by five steps, bordered by a bit of gravel, planted with an evergreen. These suburban residences were let at low rents to tenants among that large class to whom the problem of keeping up appearances, while making a fight with the wolf at the door, requires for its solution imaginative and physical ingenuity. To Jim life had begun to present itself as a continual rearing of blue, cold-looking dwellings in a sham material, for tenants whose aims seemed to him dreary and sham as their houses, and whose visages, unpractised in generous or joyous emotions, appeared to him to bear to each other a family resemblance.

A touch of the *tedium vitæ* chilled his young heart. He would have given the world for a whiff of the sea-breeze as it blew over the rock-bound coast of Argellie, and for a sight of the familiar faces. Ambitious from childhood, Jim had been swayed by moods. He would work for an object like a bit of inspired humanity, and then drift into listlessness. At the High School and at the University his career had been one of work accomplished by spurts. On occasions there displayed itself in him a deep-rooted superstitious faith, in what, for lack of a less ambitious word, we must call his destiny. He had that belief in a pre-ordained fate which links, in a sort of mystic brotherhood, the disciples of Calvin and the star-worshipping Eastern.

We may mention here that he had never been in love. Although he was young enough, and enough of a poet, to see a nimbus round every woman's head, enthusiasm for the individual was still merged in the more general regard for the sex. As he now trudged through the lanes of Chertney, and emerged from them upon a heath, with a touch of romance in its solitariness, the melancholy grew upon him. He could not walk

it down. The evening had set in, when he turned once more towards London. Rings of light formed themselves through the darkness. He thought he would go and see the tasteless city lighted up. He walked on until he came into strangely lonely streets, through the darkness of which sounded a hum and roar ; the distant noise of tramping feet and hoarse murmur of voices moved him strangely. He got into the multitude ; soon he was absorbed, taken up as in a whirlpool. The feeling suited him ; it was that of a force laying hold of his weakness. There was delight in being wedged in, swayed here, swayed there ; now jostled by a rush of robust young roughs, now noting the incidents around : the mother with her scrap of a baby in her arms—it was a wonder that a shout did not kill it ; the heads of families parted ; the lifting on brawny shoulders of a girlish figure. All around, the night was ablaze with illuminated mottoes ; the initials of the newly wedded pair clasped each other in rings of light. The people chattered and laughed. An immense excitement, an unaccountable exhilaration seized Jim. Flung hither, flung thither, as in the grasp of fate, he was borne along by the current. It had reached the fashionable part of the town, the park stretched phantom-like beyond. From brilliantly lit windows groups watched the scene.

Presently fate brought him under a balcony, lifted his head, and bade him look up. He saw right above him, standing among some richly-dressed figures—jewels, flowers, lights around her—a young girl clad in white. She was bending over the bar of the balcony ; he heard her young girlish laughter. The light touched her auburn hair, and shone full upon her face. It was the loveliest face he had ever seen. Her happiness was a glimpse of the gladness of the gay, grand world. She was unattainable to him, as a king's carriage driving past might be to a footsore beggar.

A trembling longing seized him. "I want to talk to her—if I could but make her see me!" Even as he wished it, she

looked down. He felt the passage of her gaze upon his upturned face, velvety as a caress, remote as a dream. As he felt it, an immense ambition was born in him ; the vacillation fell away. Strong-purposed, high-hoped, he stepped out of his former self. "I shall win that girl, however high above me she may be ; she shall become my wife. I shall build for her the loveliest house man ever built for woman. I shall make a fortune, and when it is made, I shall find her out and marry her."

The crowd had swung him away ; it was huzzahing before a house more brilliantly lit than the others. A loud hurrah burst from Jim's lips ; but it was not in the crowd's acclaim he was joining ; it was his Queen, his ideal, his star, he was saluting, as still he seemed to see her there, bending just above him.

II.

In a part of Chertney where, in 1863, there spread cabbage gardens, rhubarb fields, streets of decayed and wretched dwellings, rows of stucco, pseudo-classic, two-pillared houses, there rose in 1873 a suburb of red-brick mansions. Piles of ventilated bricks, blocks of white stones lay about for the building and completing of more such habitations. Lovely houses were rising on all sides, springing into existence ; they were a glory in the sunlight, brightening with a glow of colour the grey mistiness of the more usual London climate. It was a frenzy of red brick, mitigated by white copings of stone and warm-tinted tiles. Passers by, looking in at the uncompleted mansions, saw wide staircases of graceful proportions, saloons and reception rooms of splendid size, that brought dreams of future entertainments, of banquets in the air, of coming home of young brides : the place was already peopled with poetic association of what was to be. There were studios with excellent lights, Queen Anne mansions with hammered brass work, latticed windows, and walls adorned with mouldings, that wrote upon them flitting poems in light and shade ; with gabled roofs tinted as with

golden lichens, from which rose curious chimneys twisted and carved against the sky. There were smaller houses, also of brick, solid and beautiful within their limits ; there was at some distance a settlement of artisans' dwellings, that were at once picturesque and comfortable. All over the place the architect, who had transformed the quarter, might be seen for ever superintending. He was a concentrated looking young man, whose face was lined, and was interesting for the quick anxiety in the eyes and the mouth. The world discussed Mr. James Stewart's schemes. Some said that Chertney was the replica of an old Flemish city, that the gable-roof innovation was inspired by an un-English masquerading spirit ; others, who found constant matter for rejoicing in their own common-place, launched against Chertney the epithet "æsthetic," a word the meaning of which they might have found it difficult to define. Whatever Chertney was, it was the fashion.

In ten years Mr. James Stewart had realized the vow he had registered. He had made a large fortune. He had transformed a forlorn suburb into a second Belgravia—more artistic, less exclusive, than the first. He had replaced degradation, stucco, and conventionality by brick, beauty, and comfort, and he had achieved what he had set himself to do by unconquerable energy and foresight.

"It will be the ruin of us, Jim," the old man murmured, at the audacious suggestion of a divergence from the slow and sure way he had pursued ; but his timid scruples gave way before the glow and force of Jim's hope and confidence. He had won permission to become articled pupil to the first architect in London ; and during two years he worked day and night at mastering his profession, devoting his holidays to the study of house-building at various epochs on the Continent.

Before leaving the architect's office, Jim had prevailed upon his uncle to build some brick-gabled houses of which

he furnished the plan, and to which studios were attached. The old man trembled. "It'll be the ruin of us, lad," he repeated. But, strange to say, people came. The moment seemed ripe ; the artistic craze had apparently set in ; and the studios were let before they were finished. These bold departures from the two-pillared stucco houses were not yet completed when the nephew took the lead of affairs, and Chertney soon began to attract attention upon itself. Its streets were glowing with a soft blaze of beautiful red brick, that took the sun gloriously. People came, fascinated by the novelty, the grace, the taste, of these houses of quaint design. At the end of three years, Mr. James Stewart found himself in a position to erect a mansion of more ambitious plan. The house was built, and the success he had looked for was attained. It was talked of in social and artistic quarters, criticized, discussed. A tenant was found willing to pay a rent that justified the expense lavished upon it. After this the business of the firm had taken extraordinary development. For some time the shabby villa, with the plaster-bespattered work-room, had been exchanged for a roomy dwelling, with offices, which were Mr. James Stewart's head-quarters, from which he directed the army of articled pupils, decorators, and workmen under him. Capitalists were ready to advance what funds were necessary, and he borrowed fearlessly, taking no one as partner in the enterprise.

The old man still trembled, and murmured, "You're going too far, Jim ; it'll be the ruin of us !" but the protest had grown to be looked upon as a matter of form. Mr. Stewart acknowledged that his nephew had the gift of divination ; that he pushed the instinct of success to genius ; that he operated with a certainty almost uncanny. If there was luck on the young architect's side, it was the luck born of observation, of grasp of purpose, and unflinching pluck.

And always, as he toiled, there brooded above him, like the star ruling his destiny, the face he had seen bending over the

balcony. There was always in his heart the longing, "Ah! if she could see what I have done!" Under this presiding influence, the ideal touched his life, and a sacredness invested the house—it was the roof-tree, the home. A poetic longing for perfection led him to do that which those who sneered at him construed into a mercantile speculation; for it proved the finishing touch to the success of Chertney: after he had repaired the church on the property, he presented the living to a popular preacher, whose eloquence had moved him, and whom crowds flocked to hear.

After ten years, Jim relaxed the strain of his efforts. The Paradise was ready; but the Eve was not there for whom it had been prepared.

During the first years of his enterprise, he had allowed himself no time for dreams, but as affairs prospered, he would let himself dwell upon the thought of this unknown sweetheart. He would see her grown from girlhood into womanhood. He pictured her in brilliant and refined surroundings, gay, beautiful, and good. It was in the evening, during the hour after early supper, when he and his uncle sat together, and the old man dozed in his chair, that he would have waking dreams of her, that he would see her lovely face, and feel in his hand the touch of her soft palm. He had had three distinct dreams of her, when she had appeared to him in his sleep, and spoken to him. He had recorded in his little diary the conversation of those dreams—her delight in his success. "You are getting on; I shall be proud of you; we shall meet;" she had said to him; and when what the world calls common-sense rose to the brain of this man, so eminently practical in everything else but in this one thing, and demonstrated to him the nonsense of being thus influenced and ruled by the passing glimpse of a beautiful face in a window, he would open his diary and read those words, and the surprise that expanded his heart would cast out the chill of argument.

Let us say here that he knew no women, that he

kept aloof from them, that nothing occurred in his practical life to obscure the impression he had received, and from which he dated his success. The old man had long been urging his nephew to marry. To such exhortations the latter always replied, "Time enough; he could not make love and build together." He had kept his secret ten years; an unforeseen incident then led him to reveal it. That morning Jim and his uncle had assisted at the marriage of their foreman; it was evening, they sat together in the firelight, one on each side of the hearth, Jim, as usual, absorbed in the vision of his love. Mr. Stewart broke the silence with something of desperation in his accents.

"Ye're getting old, lad; what is the use of all that money without bairns? The gold has no glimmer when there's no housewife to spend it, and the house is empty without a bairn."

He stopped suddenly: he had met Jim's eyes filled with a wistful tenderness; the old man bent forward and reached out his hand. "Why, lad," he said, "ye've had a sweetheart all the while, and kept it close!"

"Yes, uncle, I've had a sweetheart, all the time," said Jim, with a queer laugh. Clasping the outstretched hand, he told his story out.

The old man listened bewildered, then shook his head. "Ten years make a deal of difference in a girl's looks; ye might be disappointed if you saw her. I'd not dwell on the thought of her, for most like she's married, or may be she's dead."

"No," replied Jim, smiling with glistening eyes, as there flitted before him the face he was always seeing, "she's more beautiful now as a woman than she was as a girl. As to her being married or dead, I cannot think that. I have a notion—it may be a foolish one—that a sort of sympathy is set between her and me, and if this had been I should have known it."

There was a silence; Jim felt its criticism; he laid his hand on the old man's shoulder. "Have I not worked great things for her sake? Do you doubt I shall win my sweetheart?"

"Surely, Jim," said Mr. Stewart, meditatively, "I am not one to go against the belief there's but one lass and one lad born for each other; still, if you find her it will be uncanny, and where will you look for her?"

"Ah, where!" demanded Jim. "She is in another world than the one in which I live. How I shall get into hers, has been all my thought." He sat down by his uncle, and discussed the plan he had matured. It is an age of hobbies and philanthropy. He would make a large donation to some charity patronized by a leader of fashion. At this gift, the charmed doors would roll back, behind which his sweetheart stood.

III.

Jim's magnificent donation to Lady Bountley's fund for the relief of the persecuted Cretans brought it about. She asked him to call upon her, and he accepted the invitation at once. Before going he went through a sort of religious rite. He laid the first stone of the house he destined to be his home. That house was to be the crown of all the houses he had built. The plan of every room hung framed in his study.

Lady Bountley declared herself fascinated with Mr. James Stewart; she was pleased to say that his energetic countenance would look well cast in bronze. She dubbed him "The Prince of Chertney." Society followed her lead; it not only opened its doors to him, but it made a sort of lion of him. His fortune, exaggerated by rumour, the originality he had displayed in making it, his liberality towards philanthropic hobbies, secured for him this distinction. Jim submitted. He allowed himself to be led in the silken leash of illustrious dames with docile good humour. He was seen everywhere: in the Park, at dinners, at balls. He drew the line of his submission at dancing only. On the whole, the Prince of Chertney was a favourite. If he was abrupt and inclined to be silent, there was nothing awkward in

his manner or speech. He had the self-reliant bearing a habit of command gives. With women, he was shy, but it was the shyness of a man whose heart, kept young by work, has not lost its belief in the sacredness of woman. Jim, at the height of his career, was very much what he had been at the beginning ; he had learnt too surely to appreciate where lay life's weakness and strength to be impressed by its show. One peculiarity of his piqued some young ladies who were facing the contingency of allowing themselves to be persuaded by him against their will to unite their lot to his fortunes. It was noticed that when he heard for the first time the name announced of some lady he had not hitherto met, the kindly yet critical humour of his glance, that seemed to hold in check the workings of his more sensitive mouth, would suddenly pass into expectant eagerness ; on beholding the new-comer this would invariably be replaced by a pained and baffled expression. During a season in London and another in the country, Jim led this life of haunting society. He went everywhere and met everybody, from royal scions to rich *parvenus* like himself. He pursued his quest unremittingly and his quest proved fruitless. He had never seen the face he sought, or recognized one that distantly even reminded him of hers. He could get no clue as to who had been present on the day of the Prince of Wales' marriage, at that house in Park Lane on the balcony of which she had stood. He had been at that house. He had dined with its present inhabitants one evening at the end of the season, and the occasion had been a turning-point in the life he was leading. Through the day he had heard whispers in the air, and seen visions in the clouds, that he should meet her. But when that night proved blank of result as the others, a chill touched his hope, and he recognized the possibility of failure. Valiant and persisting, he would not admit the probability ; he went on as usual, but a melancholy grew upon him. During the ordeal, the "old man's" behaviour was singular. At first he had been

sympathetically and trustfully on the alert ; after a while, he had given up questioning his nephew, but furtively watched his countenance, and kept darkly silent. When Jim returned from a prolonged country visit in the early winter, the old man showed an emphatic indifference concerning whom he had met or seen. He was peevish and his kindly spirits languished. Jim thought he looked ill, and vowed that he would never leave him for so long again.

"I would not keep coming and going on a fool's quest," acquiesced Mr. Stewart, looking up at the ceiling with an angry flurry in his glance, and limply caressing his grey chin. "I do not see what good is like to come of all the fuss and flurry ye made about Chertney. Ye might have left the place alone."

"There was some good in making a property worth a hundred fold what it was," curtly interrupted Jim, rising and leaving the room. From that evening he avoided intimate talk with his uncle, the burden of whose regrets he feared. He also gave up going into society ; he absorbed himself in work as strenuous as when he was seeking to build his fortunes. Those about Jim felt, nevertheless, that he was altered ; he was irritable, his voice had lost its ring, his manner its spirit. This endeavour to give himself another aim, to pursue work for work's sake, failed ; he felt weakened and troubled, as before a purposeless life. He was angered by this sense of defeat ; a violent reaction set in, and his energy languished.

One spring evening, he and his uncle were sitting opposite each other on either side of the table. Their intercourse had grown restrained and somewhat morose. Once more it was Mr. Stewart who suddenly broke the silence, with a laugh of forlorn audacity. "The house is just finished ye were building for your home—we'd better think of moving into it. There'll be plenty of space—and like to remain plenty."

Jim got up and walked to the window ; the moon swung in the sky, jewelling the earth with its transfiguring light. After

a pause, Jim's voice came quietly through the stillness, "I've given her up, uncle. I see it was folly, the notion that I could find her after all these years. It is some time since it came to me that I had lost her. I would not admit it at first. I now seem to know it." His voice dropped suddenly, a cloud drifted over the moon, and darkened the world. It seemed to Jim the last flicker of a smile that had been over his life had faded away from it.

"Ah, Jim, lad," said Mr. Stewart, with a burst of tremulous hopefulness. "I'd die happy if I thought ye had given up that folly. It stands between you and every bonnie lassie ye meet. What's the use of all this wealth without bairns?"

Jim came over to the old man's side—"You romantic, irrepressible youngster," he said with an absurd attempt at the old tone, "I'll just bring home a wife to gladden your outrageous match-making instinct."

Jim went back into the world, and returned to give Mr. Stewart a glowing description of the women he met therein. The variety of their attractions fairly bewildered Mr. Stewart. He watched Jim with a yearning scrutiny as the latter confessed himself unable to decide between those manifold charms. It was true enough; no individual woman had the power to attract him. His heart had lived out its romance none the less surely that the romance had been for an apparition. With a melancholy humour he took to envying the Darby and Joan happiness of the silver wedding, but he had no spirit for the courtship or the wooing.

IV.

Spring had passed into summer. The house Jim had built for his home was finished, needing the last completing touches only. It was a June morning, and he was making his way to the house of Mr. Smith, an art decorator, whom he often employed. It was a warm, clear morning, instinct with a delicate freshness blown upon it by breezes, exhilarating as a promise. Nature penetrated Jim's mood, and roused in him the old habit of

anticipation. He walked quickly, with alert carriage and brightened glance. Suddenly he realized the nonsense the whole thing had been from beginning to end. He chafed against the sense of bankruptcy and frustration that came with the acknowledgment of the folly of it all. As he turned into the street where the art decorator lived, he moved his feet heavily, as if plodding through ruins.

It was an old-fashioned, narrow thoroughfare ; and as he came opposite the house he instinctively looked up. The window on the ground floor was open, and a woman stood within it. She was in mourning, her beautiful, slightly worn face surrounded by black. As Jim's eyes rested upon her, he felt as if at his feet a soundless shock had passed. It seemed to him as if all the world was engulfed ; that just this strip of it was left, with himself and this woman opposite to him, alone upon it. He was conscious neither of surprise nor of gratitude at seeing her there, only of the single fact that he had found her whom he had sought so long. There was no hesitation in his recognition ; he knew her in her pallor and grief, he recognized her in her womanhood and sorrowful raiment. It was she whom, nigh upon twelve years ago, he had seen, carrying the star of his life upon her brow. She was now looking abstractedly before her ; presently she turned her eyes in his direction and disappeared.

He crossed the street and pulled violently at Mr. Smith's bell ; it was a moment or two before the door was opened. Jim brushed past the servant into the room where she had been. It was empty. As he was gazing blankly at the window, the art-decorator came in. Jim blunderingly explained that he must see the lady who had been there a moment ago. "Miss Elliott, I suppose you mean ; poor thing ! she's come to ask for work. It's awfully rough upon me ; she's beautiful, deucedly hard up, and from specimens she's shown me of her tile painting, she understands as little about decorative art as

any woman I ever met, and that is saying a good deal. Her father is dead—bankrupt—widowed mother to keep. What can one do in such a case?"

"I must see her, I must see her alone!" said Jim, breathlessly.

The next moment he had gone upstairs, and entered the room where she stood. He met the wistful expectancy of her glance, that passed into melancholy indifference when she recognised that the intruder was not one who could give her work. The forlornness of her aspect softened the wild *Te Deum* Jim's pulses were beating. "Miss Elliott," he began, heroically smoothing his voice, "I have known you—that is—I have known of you some twelve years." He stopped precipitately as he had begun. He heard her say something to the effect that she did not remember him. "No, of course not; my name is Stewart," replied Jim; "not that this will help you much," he went on with an awkward attempt at a laugh. As he spoke he was realizing, as he had never realized in his longing, that to her, who had been the ruling principle of his life, he appeared a perfect stranger. This stupefying thought gradually filled his whole sense to the exclusion of every other. He began again with an attempt at formality. "I saw you, for the first time, Miss Elliott—I mean—the only time—at a house in Park Lane, No. —; it was on the night of the Prince of Wales' marriage. Ah!" he added in a tone of despairing appeal, "don't you remember being there that night?" "I do," she said, below her breath; "I remember that night very well."

He crossed the room and stood by her. "Why do you remember it?" he asked anxiously.

She drew back, and looked at him perplexed.

"You will excuse me, Miss Elliott," Jim resumed, trying desperately to maintain some show of outward composure, "when you know the reason of my strange question. I will explain—indeed, there is a reason for it." As she remained

puzzled and silent, he went on with a fine attempt at a business-like tone. "I understood Mr. Smith to say you wanted artistic decorative work." He watched the brightening interest on her face. "I think I can help you to work of this kind. I myself give out such work. I have built a good many houses in Chertney; I can put you in the way of plenty of work."

"I want work more than anything," she replied. "Much depends upon my getting it. I would do my best if you would try me." She hesitated; then she said, speaking low and rapidly, "You asked me why I remembered that night of the Prince's marriage. I remember it because it was the last of my careless life. The next day brought bad news of a bank, of which my father was a director; it failed soon after. He died a few months ago. For years we did nothing but wander, hiding from creditors. Ah!" she exclaimed, with a great blush, "now you know it all."

"But *you* don't know all," broke out Jim, pale to the lips. "That night was the last also of another life. A young man was in the crowd that filled the streets. He came under the window of that house and saw you. He had been ambitious before, but listless of purpose; after that glimpse of your face the world held for him an object—to win you—yes, to win you. He was poor—he became rich. And as he made this wealth, one thought only urged him on, that when it was made, he would seek you—he would find you: he would so move you by the story of the zeal you had kindled, that he would win you—yes, you—as he had vowed to himself he would. Miss Elliott, that young man was myself."

He paused, her face was no longer quiet and pale, it was thrilling with wonder and doubt sweeping over it. He tried to take her hand, but she quickly recoiled, and stood aloof. Then once more the recognition, he had forgotten for a moment, of the blank that during all those years he had been in her life, returned with overwhelming force. "For pity's

sake," he said, pleadingly, "just answer one question more, just this one. Is there another whom you love?"

"Oh no," she replied, in a choking voice, shaking her head, "there was no space in my life for love."

Jim drew a long breath. "Thank God! thank God!" he uttered in a low tone, that had as much triumph as thankfulness in it. "And yet it could not have been otherwise. I should never have despaired; I should never have given up the assurance of finding you. My yearning to find you would, I think, have drawn you from the dead. And all that while adversity was keeping you—hiding my jewel from others."

Once more he tried to take her hand, but she evaded his grasp.

"No, no," she said, wildly, as if resisting a compelling force, "I don't know you; you don't know me. It is an ideal woman you love—not me."

"It is you," he interrupted with energy. "It was for your sake I did it all. For your sake it was I made this fortune. But," he went on, gently, reverencing her scruples, "I should not have told you this so suddenly, only you have influenced my life so long, that when I found you at last, I could not realize you knew nothing of it, and I did not know how to begin telling you. If you will only let me come and see you; that is all I ask. Surely you cannot refuse me that. I shall woo you long and patiently as you may wish; but I shall win you yet—I shall win you. It is written in heaven. I shall win you."

She hesitated; and he pressed his advantage.

"I only ask you to let me come and see you. I only ask you to consent to know me."

She gave him her hands, and as they met his clasp, there passed into her eyes the calm of an accepted blessing.

Six months after, the beautiful house in Chertney was illuminated from cellar to attic; the suburb, in compliment

of the home-coming of the architect and his bride, had put up a triumphal arch, and written some welcoming mottoes in evergreens and in lights. Mr. Stewart waited for his nephew on the threshold of the new home. Around him stood a knot of the oldest servants of the firm. The old man broke the silence into which he had fallen awhile, and during which he caressed his grey chin with absent fingers :—

“ Every man’s got his way of getting on,” he said at last, meditating. “ One man’s way is slow, but sure ; another’s quick and sure, too ; and one man is born lucky, and another’s born hard-working ; and we can safely say how it’ll turn out for each. But when a man is both hard-working and lucky together, then there’s no calculating ; it’s out of one’s reckoning.”

ALICE CORKRAN.

With Ariel.

To-day, then, sit with me at Shakespeare's feet
Enquiring. Peradventure we shall see
Ariel, returning from the elements,
Whereto the spirit was at last resolved
When Prosper's work was done, for some brief space,
To speak of what the Mighty Master meant
By conjuration of the mystic storm.
Come then, dear Spirit ! cease awhile to live
Under the blossom of the summer's bough !
Appear, O sweet and delicate thing of air,
And give us of the honey thou hast stored
Since that mysterious time before thy freedom,
When thou didst cleave to Prosper's saving thought !
Throw wide the portals of that hidden realm,
Where he and thou wrought all those spells divine.
Instil upon our eyes and brooding hearts,
For better knowledge of his soul and thee,
Something of the delight which thou hast known,
While dreaming, couched in bells of happy flowers,
Or labouring under light of happy noons
With generations of industrious bees,
In all the growing fairness of God's earth.
Come then, and set our souls aflame with thee
As erst thou didst the ship at Prosper's will.
One task remains, O Sprite, for thee to do,
For crowning of thy lord's delightful work :
One revelation for thy lips to make
For binding of our lives to his and thine.
Pass then for ever to thy realm of flowers,
Whose odours and whose hues throughout all time
Shall be enriched for us with thoughts of thee.

BOOKS have their destinies, the Roman poet has told us ; and Shakespeare's "book," more than any other, is bound up with the evolution of all human destiny. Never before was there, never again shall there be, so full a presentation of the thought of man embodied in dramatic deed. Never before was the Theory of life so fully set forth in the Theatre of artistic

presentation. There will be no dissent from such averments as these; rather will they be impeached for commonplace. Yet for conclusions that follow upon these apparent truisms few even among the most critical and contemplative are prepared. The very absoluteness of the dramatic perfection of the work of Shakespeare appears to many to negative the idea of any such prophetic element or purpose therein as should render interpretation possible only by the light of the subsequent evolution of human history. To suggest allegoric, or any secondary implications or intentions in any part of this imagined world of living, breathing men and women, created by Shakespeare, and subsisting for ever by the side of men and women in the flesh, is even exasperating to some minds. Yet it would be stranger still if the mind that could and did conceive life with such dramatic perfection had really succeeded in separating the study of humanity, viewed in representative men and women, from the psychologic analysis that leads inevitably to dogmatic purpose and historical forecast. And the supreme dramatist, who declared that the whole world is a stage, could hardly have refrained from dealing with his own more technical and limited stage, so as to present a prophetic microcosm of that larger world's possibilities and future. The truth is, that minute study of Shakespeare's work throughout affords multiplied hint and indication that he well knew himself to be doing more than infusing the breath of life into certain men and women for a few hours in a play—well knew himself to be not merely casting the parts of theatrical personages of limited dramatic scope, but also forecasting the part of humanity at large, the general scheme of existence.

This purpose existed and became systematic in his final or testamentary work, known by the name of "The Tempest." And, assuredly, if the purpose existed at all, it would be precisely in such final work that it would be most likely to find adequate expression and effective presentation. The full un-

folding of the interpretation which brings out all the purpose and meaning of this most complex of the poetic works of man, wherein a world of quintessential meanings is condensed into the very minimum of verbal space, would be possible only where far ampler scope and verge are at command than in these pages. No more can here and now be done than to afford brief indications and clues of guidance.

In a previous sentence a hint has been given of the connexion between Theory and the Theatre. Unhappily, our modern English is a compound of broken German, broken Greek, and broken Latin ; and we all speak and write but a broken language. So we fail to see at once that the Theatre is the place where life is presented as a dramatized Theory thereof. There is, however, no escape from this conclusion for the most hide-bound realist. There is, in fact, no photographic mechanism about the drama. Characters and incidents dare not, it is true, absolutely contradict reality ; but they must positively be invented. An idea must take hold of the elements of actual life, and compose of them something that stands over against mere actuality. And this idea, therefore, acts by way of decomposing the concrete real facts and issues of life, and of recomposing them afresh. In the Greek drama this was most keenly felt, and presented in its highest aspect, as the struggle between heroic individuality and Fate itself. It follows from this, that the drama of the theatre is not only a reflex of, but tends insensibly to become a protest against the drama of actuality. And, as that field of dramatic or theatric effort is the one in which the ideal and the idealist work in closest contact with real and actual things, it may, and perhaps must, exhibit this necessary opposition and conflict in its most acute form. A Shelley, writing his "Adonais," protests in only a general way against the real world, "the shadow of our night," doing so from a sphere too remote to be destructive, or regenerative, or reformatory thereof. But

the stage and the world, the players and the audience, are so near to each other that the collision between them is unavoidable. The idealist's rearrangement of life and circumstance in the drama cannot, even if it would, avoid exercising a dissolvent influence on the real world inhabited by the spectators.

With such thoughts as these, the whole being of Shakespeare must have been penetrated throughout the entire period of his career of production. His work as dramatist necessarily evoked them at every turn. Deeply interesting it would be to trace their working, from first to last, and throughout his scenes and characters. From time to time this central purpose of the drama, this underlying law or necessity of its existence, comes up with startling force. It is "cursed spite" to a Hamlet that he has to set right a world out of joint. We may, then, conceive of this haunting Imagination of Shakespeare, whereby he was laid under the necessity of re-creating the real world in various forms of tentative regeneration—this secret thought of his, known only to himself, as the Ariel, bound up with his soul in a mutual bondage, and destined at last to be set free when the transformation, the regeneration of the real always latent in his ideal world, should at last receive full, final, exhaustive, and adequate expression in a crowning work.

The Ariel whose re-appearance we have at the outset invoked for our instruction as to Shakespeare's life and art, was then the instrument of his purpose throughout all his constructions, or rather all his destructive re-constructions of the things and persons of the real world. And as this spirit, his Imagination, had been invisible throughout all his earlier work, known, seen, felt, by himself alone, so was the spirit that was the property of his thought ("Unto thy thoughts I cleave") to be visible only to Prospero-Shakespeare when they accomplished their final task of exhibiting the idea at work in dissolving, or wrecking, the real world for its ultimate regeneration. This done, Shakespeare had indeed "liberated his soul," and the

spirit of his thought was free to resolve itself into the elements; to mingle with the universe of influences which should bring to pass, in slow historical evolution, all that the master and the spirit had forecast, and in the deepest possible sense prefigured, in theory and the theatre.

Let us note that this broad prefiguration, this regenerative dissolution of the real world, this making of new history on the stage, in anticipation of the new history of mankind to come on the theatre of actual affairs, was possible for the first time at the moment of history when Shakespeare was embodied for his labour. The drama, as already suggested, always had for its central idea the conflict between the real and the ideal worlds. But fate was too strong for the hero in the antique drama. Never did it enter into the mind of antiquity to conceive that the type of human existence—personal, social, political—could be changed wholly by heroic effort. The world was a fixture in creation, according to the apprehension of the ancient mind. Institutions were as immovable as was the very earth itself to antique man. There was no multiform movement round the central orb, and, in company with that, throughout the depths of space. The world was surrounded by insurmountable walls of flame. The theatre, therefore, could but make a sublime but barren protest against inexorable and unalterable conditions. But the ancient world fell into ruins; and for a thousand years the imagination of man ceased to act in individuals. The ideal world of rescue and regeneration from actualities, in which genius lives and moves, became represented by the Church, the Sanctuary, the City of Refuge for mankind from earthly conditions, which presented itself as the final and absolute solution of that greatest of all problems. But with the breach of the Catholic Unity of Christendom, and the identification of England with that wide schism, the dramatic genius of mankind again asserted its precarious claims to deal on its own independent footing with this transcendent question

of the conflict between the real and ideal existence. And of deep significance it is, as well as of perfect spiritual consistency, that the Church should ever since have regarded the theatre, the drama, and the players, as, in some sort, in rebellion against her authority, in some sort excommunicate from her system and her privileges, because competing with herself in the solution of a problem exclusively her own.

Of these new historical conditions, Shakespeare became the supreme personal representative. And the new conditions enabled him and his Ariel, before the final liberation of the spirit, before the final silence of them both, to conceive and present the regeneration of the real world in dramatic theory, with a psychologic adequacy and a breadth of suggestion of outward historical transformation, that never, for the reasons given, could, before the age of Shakespeare and Ariel, have been possible. It is of the utmost importance to grasp this fact, crucial as it is to the present argument, that Shakespeare and Ariel worked precisely at the moment of human history when the idea of a new era of humanity first became a living, practical, and practicable force. There was the great schism among Christians; there was an enormous impulse of fervour and piety within the Catholic Church herself; there was the opening out of the continents, the great geographic revelation; there was the great astronomical revolution. The world in all previous times had been, so to speak, anchored in port; now the anchor was weighed, the sails unfurled; now the ship, freighted with the fortunes of mankind, was indeed about to set out on its daring voyage of discovery throughout the great ocean of the Unknown.

This was the moment of history when Shakespeare and Ariel seized upon that ship of the real world to work out together their great scheme of thought, whereby that world should be wrecked for its regeneration. All the dramas before this had been but a prelude of their labours; now, the totality

of their purpose, latent hitherto, was to be brought into one explicated comprehensive plan, covering the whole ground of the practical and speculative, and exhibiting in one supreme allegoric presentation the relation between bare real fact and idealist regeneration of fact, in the soul, in the family, and in the State.

We may thus lay our hand firmly on the true meaning of the title of Ariel's drama. Shakespeare, Prospero, and Ariel, dwelt together on that lone mystical island wherein the idealist weaves his spells, acquires mastery over the brutal facts of the soul and life, comes into close relations with the spirits, superior and inferior, who do his bidding: this is the sequestered island of the ideal world. On this island the idealist, misplaced as ruler of the dukedom of the real world, had found refuge when expelled from the places of authority over actual things which he was so little fitted to exercise. Here the idealist works out his purpose. And this, for the first time in history, could be presented as a storm of revolution, affecting the ship of State in the first instance, and pointing, in the most peremptory way, to the passing away of the old political order, in this abstract imaginative world to begin with, afterwards on the stage of real affairs.

Herein, then, is the specific characteristic of "The Tempest." While its general purpose is to show the operation of the spells of the magician idealist in transforming reality—always and ever the general purpose of all theoretic (or theatric) representation—"The Tempest" takes, as the starting-point of its great operation, the revolutionary idea in its political and strictest sense. The transformation of the spiritual conditions of individuals which is worked out in the evolution of the play is no longer, as in the previous dramatic work of the world, mere dramatized psychology. It is now political as well. It is the State itself whereof the regeneration is primarily now held in view. It is now not merely influences, as of religious ideas

or human passions, with which the dramatic re-composer of life deals. The ship of the real world is to be wrecked on the shores of the island of the ideal. And this is so effected by the storm raised by Prospero and Ariel, as to show clearly that now the State itself is to be transformed, under revolutionary insurgence of the workers against the futilities and splendours and corruptions of monarchies and aristocracies, who were to perish utterly unless redeemed by the subsequent working of the magician's ideas, when these imperilled things and their representatives should come fairly within his domain so as to be subject to his spells.

This is indicated in broad unmistakable outlines in the first scene, in which the ship is seen labouring with the tempest. The Princes of the real world—the King of Naples, his brother Sebastian, Antonio, the usurper of the Milan dukedom of his brother Prospero, and the others—are plainly told by the boatswain to "keep below," to "keep their cabins," and that "they assist the storm." The boatswain has all the bluntness of the *sans-culottes*, his antitypes of two centuries later. He is told by one of the august passengers to be patient. "When the sea is," he replies. "Hence! what care these roarers for the name of king? To cabin; silence! trouble us not." But he is bidden further to remember whom he has on board—kings, princes, nobles. His answer is decisive: "None that I more love than myself. You are a counsellor; if you can command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more; use your authority: if you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap." Here was sounded for the first time the keynote of all subsequent political revolution.

The ship is wrecked; according to all appearance, goes to pieces. But it is of the last importance to the understanding of the purpose of Prospero-Shakespeare to remember that this

wreck is illusory. In regard to this there is a general and a specific significance; general as to the working of the idea everywhere and always upon life, and specific in regard to the political side of the prophecy of the drama. The breaking down of real conditions, accomplished by the working idealist, is, in deep and very truth, never a real wreck; with whatever inward bitterness or outward calamity it may be accompanied, the fabric of existence remains still unimpaired; there is no real breach of the house of life; the tenants thereof are but brought to a happier, purer, more exalted frame of being. There is transformation and regeneration, never more than a semblance of destruction. For the Idea is essentially constructive. In regard to the political side of "The Tempest," —the insurgence of the world's working crew against unregenerate authority—the warning suggestion is of the most profound order. To understand it, we have, by anticipation, to consider as completed the whole complex ideal purpose of Shakespeare, Prospero, and Ariel. The drama has been worked out, let us suppose. Ferdinand and Miranda—prince of the real world, wonder-princess of the region of the ideal—have been brought together. By a most subtle process of profound psychologic import, a true regeneration, new birth, repentance, has been effected in the souls of the kings, princes, nobles, wrecked upon the island of the Idea. The conflict of spiritual principles involved in all this has been presented in deepest dramatic implications—not dogmatically or by precept, but by the way of life itself, the movement of embodied principles of the higher and lower lives. The great work of Prospero on the soul is done for princes:

They being penitent—
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further: go, release them, Ariel;
My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
And they shall be themselves.

The insurrection of the workers, in view of this redemption of the souls of princes and rulers, becomes unnecessary in the ideal scheme. There was no need for more than emphatic warnings of its imminence. The master and boatswain of the ship are brought in to take part in the final scene, led by Ariel, then and always invisible to every eye save that of Prospero-Shakespeare. Where have they been during all the working of the drama, wherein all the other persons have been directly operated on by the redemptive spells of the magician? King Alonzo demands of them how they came thither. The boatswain's reply should be well weighed :—

If I did think, sir, I were well awake,
I'd strive to tell you—*we were dead of sleep*
And (how we know not) all clapp'd under hatches.

And, as he goes on to tell, they were awakened with all sorts of horrid noises, saw their good ship safe and in brave trim, and so were brought face to face again with their masters and betters. The significance of all this it is impossible to mistake. Prospero-Shakespeare penetrated the political secret of the coming centuries; he saw the very core-principle of the historical evolutions that were approaching. The great alternatives of the State were present to him as with the vivid presences of destroying and saving angels. On the one side, instruction, regeneration, change of soul and purpose in rulers, obedience on their part to the purifying spells of the thinking imagination, the imaginative thought; on the other side, destruction at the hands of the men who work the ship, the insurgent and incendiary crew. These may be kept under hatches while those spells are working. But upon that crew, that reserved, chaotic mass of the workers, the magician's spells can have no effect. Ariel has no place or word of power with them or for them. They are a volcanic force which may per-adventure be let loose at last by the overruling fiat of Providence, if the deluge is indeed necessary to drown a

political order ; but they can have no place in the symmetria of dramatic, political, imaginative thought. If the rulers will not or cannot rule, then must it be that states, empires, princes, be submerged under the tide of invading barbarism. Chaos needs must come again ; and only the spirit of God can, by moving over the face of the waters, bring out new forms of associated existence, and firm ground whereon mankind may begin to build and plant once again.

There is no space or opportunity in these pages to follow out in detail, by analysis of the scenes and personages of the drama, the operation of the spells of Prospero upon that part of life whereon they really have their appropriate field of possible action. No more can be done than to aver that in every utterance of every person, and in all the strange phantasmagoria of the incidents, there is a firm hold on the central idea, and a most apt and exquisite explanation of it. The object of such an article as this can scarcely be more than to send the reader to a study of the drama itself, so little known as it is, and so rarely read, except as a superficial fairy tale.

A. H. LOUIS.

Bogeys of Provincial Life.

SCANDAL.

IF dulness be the cross, tittle-tattle is the curse, of English country life ; and where monotony depresses the spirits of the young, gossip and scandal, and the insidious venom of tittle-tattle, destroy the happiness with the repute of both young and old alike. From the one a way of relief is always open to the resolute and energetic ; from the other no escape is possible even to the bravest when once the tide has set in. How can you escape ? "Making a stir" too often means merely making things worse, fixing the colours and burning in the outlines, so that these are indelible and those ineffaceable ; and "living it down" is but a sorry exercise of patience with the too probable chance of never coming to the end. For "living it down" is a difficult bit of business, however undertaken, and time does not heal all wounds, though he skins over many. The man who has been the social St. Sebastian of a community—bound to the tree of slander, to be shot at by every wandering marksman flush of arrows, and pierced through and through with cruel shafts—has never quite the same flesh and feeling as before.

Grant that nothing has been proved, and that those arrows drop out of their inherent worthlessness—still there ever clings to him the vague shadow of a formless something ; and people, years after the more precise terms of the accusation are forgotten, say to each other doubtfully : "But what was that story against Mr. Dash ? There was something. What was it ?" No one answers : "A fabrication ; a slander ; a paragraph of tittle-tattle magnified into a page of living history." For no one admits the existence now-a-days of slanderous fabrications. We believe no longer in innocent martyrs suffering because of the

heart of unbelief and the sinful misrepresentation of wicked men. Our social St. Sebastians are moral malefactors caught red-handed, and righteously punished for their misdeeds ; and though Lucrezia Borgia may be whitewashed and regilded, and our English Bluebeard shown to be the most maligned as well as the sweetest young prince who ever wore the crown, the men and women who have been the object of slander in a country place are never now wholly rehabilitated. And, like all the wounded, they carry the scars and the smarting made by those arrows down with them to the grave.

But all gossip is not slander, you say ; and all tittle-tattle is not of necessity so much "copy" out of the current number of the "Scandalous Chronicle." People who gossip and chatter, and repeat and magnify, for want of something better to do, are not always intentionally assassinating reputations or consciously giving the deathblow to an honest man's peace of mind, or an innocent woman's fair fame. True. But if you set the stone rolling down hill, can you bid it stop when it begins to crash among the tender vines, to break down the sweet-scented flowers, and uproot the useful herbs ? If you bore a hole in the dyke, that a lad might stop with his little finger, can you prevent the flood which will come with leakage, time, and cumulative pressure ? Neither can you limit the spread of gossip nor fix the point when tittle-tattle shall not broaden into scandal. The beginning of things alone is under our control. The spark can be stamped out, but the blaze spreads ; and let the salvage be what it may, there is always so much loss to be reckoned with. So with the gossip of country places. What A laughs at as an oddity, B censures as an imprudence, and C condemns as a crime. And the world at large, prone to broad lines, accepts the latest version and the most dramatic form, and joins with C in solemn reprobation, rather than with A in half-amused and half good-natured derision ; which, by the way, however good-natured it may be,

has very likely no more solid groundwork than in A's own unusedness to strange habits and consequent dislike to what he does not know.

Before railroads and circular tickets had made locomotion general and foreign travel easy, difference of times, of personal habits, even of modes of dress, was sufficient to rouse up all the instinct of gossip and spirit of condemnation of a small place, wedded to its own ways and intolerant of strange idols. Breakfast taken in a dressing-gown, with unbrushed hair, though under a smart mob cap, has been enough before now to create a mildew of disrespect round the character of a woman in a small society given to trim waists and the day's active doings begun betimes. Playing at cards in daylight, and a "pony" laid on the Derby favourite, have been the knell of more than one honourable gentleman's repute in country places of rigid morality and fluid gossip. The tale of these enormities has been added to and enlarged by tittle-tattle till they were made from reprehensible habits into shameful sins; and the persons guilty of them were supposed capable of committing any other crime in the calendar. If people would only believe that difference does not necessarily include disparagement—that the code of right and wrong is very various in its forms, and stands only on one or two absolutes—things would be better for us all than they are now; but our own rigidity is very often part pride in the belief that we must be right, part jealousy that others should enjoy what we have renounced, with a dash of that tyranny which is inborn in us all, and by which we wish to make all men to our own pattern and to be the arbiters of the world in which we live.

Tittle-tattle is like the grain of mustard-seed, which, once planted, shoots up into such mighty strength that it overshadows all the earth, or like the tiny fish which grew and grew till it outgrew first the bowl, then the pond, then the lake, and finally filled the deep sea with its monstrous bulk. A

little story of utter insignificance in itself, carried out of one house and manipulated in another, is the grain of mustard-seed, in the branches of which vultures can sit, and kites and hawks make their cruel nests. Such a little thing as it was in the beginning! An ill-tempered tradesman, angry because fault is found with his extortion; the organization of a tennis party, whereof the leader is to be that handsome Captain Lovelace on the one side, and pretty Mrs. Fourstars on the other—an organization which demands a few meetings between these two to settle dates and the like, while Mr. Fourstars is in London, called off suddenly by business: things as substantially innocent and unimportant as these have been made by tittle-tattle into matters of vital moment and deadly import. One carries the story to the other, like a fiery cross, which gathers force as it goes. At the end of things, Mrs. Brisket's red face and muttered expletives portend Mrs. Dash's bankruptcy, not to say swindling; and that Captain Lovelace had been seen to come twice out of Mrs. Fourstars' house, while the husband was in London, is the evidence of something which makes the quick return of that husband a matter of urgent necessity, if he does not wish the whole thing to go to the bad. No "Russian scandal" ever came out at the end more transmuted, more unlike what it was at the beginning, than does the vague, weak tittle-tattle of a country-place in its final form of solid scandal. It was not intended in the beginning—certainly not; but it was the stone set rolling down the hill; the spark struck among dry wood; the hole bored in the dyke with the devastating flood to follow—it was tattle culminating in slander; and the ruin of the whole happiness of lives for the pleasure of mobile lips and the occupation of idle hours.

Were we educated up to the highest point of true honour we should look on gossip as we look now on listening at doors, peeping through keyholes, reading another person's letters, and filching what was handy and would not be missed.

That is, we should look on it as a thing so mean and base, so ungenerous and dishonourable, as to be impossible to a gentleman, to a lady, whose names expressed their state. And especially should we forbear to repeat conversations, and we should regard small admissions as sacredly as we now hold grave confessions. Most *tête-à-tête* talks between pleasant acquaintances—not necessarily sworn friends—drift into a certain burst of confidential unreserve. People will say to one alone things which they would shrink from confiding to two together—things which they do not want discussed, nor quoted, nor commented on, nor repeated. The interlocutor understands this unwritten convention, this tacit understanding perfectly well, and endorses it by the very fact of accepting this quasi-confidence of his comrades. But the instant he leaves him, or her, who has lifted up that little corner of the veil which covers his thoughts, his life, her past, her hopes, he straightway carries his burden to some one else, and makes a present, with additions, of all that has been given him to keep.

Suppose the quasi-confidence has been on certain doubts about the infallible authority of the Thirty-nine Articles—doubts that an anxious mind will sometimes expose reverently but frankly *in camerâ*, and under the belief of security, but that it does not want to be made public. Loosetongue listens with that hypocritically sympathetic manner of his by which he attracts confidences as the candle attracts the moths. His words full of softness, his face full of feeling, he listens to all that *Incrédule* has to say. He leads him on by seeming to share his thoughts, and to sympathize with his state; he gives no sign of disapprobation, utters no word of dissent; but, the first man he meets, after he has had “that strange talk with *Incrédule*,” he tells him in agitated haste, all, and more than all, that has been said—“such dreadful things, you know! so shocking! so awful!” and he adds that *Incrédule* is a con-

firmed atheist who believes in nothing, and that when he dies he ought not to be buried in consecrated ground.

Thus *Incrédule* lives henceforth in that narrow, hide-bound, orthodox community as its black sheep, a marked man—a man not to be trusted because without a standard of right and wrong—a man who may be held capable of any enormity. Neither fearing God nor believing in the devil, what hold has any one over him? He has no morality because he has no belief; and what is to prevent him from forging your name to a bill, making love to your wife, or running off with your daughter, so loose in principle, so uncontrolled by higher influences as he is? No one is safe with such a man; and the best thing to do is to give him a wide berth, and keep to the other side of the way. And when such things as these are said of women, of course it is far worse for them than it is even for the man.

Hence the tittle-tattle of repeating all that has been said in perhaps indiscreet, but by implication sacred, confidence, is one of the most cruel as well as one of the most dis-honourable things that can be done. Those who are brave enough to have the courage of their opinions carry their flag unconcealed; and stand firm under the arrows, fall as thickly as they may. But there are many who are bound to outward conformity by duties of more force than that of testifying; and to betray these is to commit moral assassination. The same want of honour in repeating what is confessed in this kind of implied confidence, is shown in the tittle-tattle which retails all that is said by one of another. In a fatal moment of perhaps irritation, of perhaps false trust, and loss of habitual reserve, you confess to Mrs. Loosetongue that you do not like Mr. and Mrs. So-and-So. She is affected, he is boasting; she is deceitful, he is untrust-worthy; she paints, he pads—she coquets, he flirts. You are a fool for your confidence; but who is always wise?—and Mrs. Loose-tongue is so sweet! But you do not look through those soft

eyes into the busy brain behind ; you do not see that dear Mrs. Loosetongue is sympathetic only to deceive—listening so kindly that she may be trusted entirely, and thus be enabled to betray more completely. She agrees with all you say, and laughs to your echo ; then leaves you, and goes straightway to those of whom you have been silly enough to speak as you think—the thought being unfriendly. In the nicest and sweetest way in the world—what woman has such a charming manner !—she bids them beware of you. You are the worst enemy they have in the place ; and she tells them all you have said with the customary trimming and variations inseparable from tittle-tattle ; and when she has done this she has satisfied her soul, and carries her share of the daily offerings made in country places to the great god Gossip. You are made aware of her treachery by the change in the manner of those you have discussed and censured. But you cannot take any notice of this change, as your conscience tells you what it means. You only resolve never to trust Mrs. Loosetongue again, and to treat her with marked coldness from this time henceforward, by which you simply add another enemy to those already made, and live to have cause to regret your moment of indiscretion and unneighbourly expansion.

All this personal gossip and tittle-tattle, repeating here, exaggerating there, and doing harm always, is one of the vilest of our smaller vices. There is so much to talk of beside people ! If we would talk of things and not persons—if we would hold sacred all that is said to us in that kind of tacit understanding, that kind of implicit reliance on our honourable silence, which we all comprehend, and so seldom act on, we should live in more peace and in an infinitely purer atmosphere than we do now. There is no use in ignoring the dramatic instinct of humanity, an instinct as universal as all the others ; and society has a certain right to take some account of the conduct of its members ; but this dramatic instinct need not

always deal in daggers and poison bowls ; and taking account of the conduct of those in whose midst we live ought not to include espionage, nor be conducted by means of tittle-tattle. We need not spoil lives for our own sport, nor waste our force in an amusement fit only for children, for savages, for the uneducated and the unreflecting, and for none other. The finest education rises above all forms of gossip, all phrases of tittle-tattle ; the truest honour repudiates them ; but we still go on with them as part of our daily doings, as ingredients in our usual food ; and, like those who are accustomed to eat poison, we have habituated ourselves so much to their shameful evil as to have ceased to see their enormity, or to feel the repugnance which they ought to inspire.

E. LYNN LINTON.

Reviews and Views.

MR. GEORGE MEREDITH has produced a volume—"Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of the Earth"—in which we hear the individual note, the separate voice, which is the first thing we listen for when a poet begins to sing. So long as the voice is personal and singular it does not need that the tune should be new. And Mr. Meredith's subjects are for the most part as familiar as showers and moonrise and the careering of the wind, and as fresh. There is no freshness so perfect as that of the familiarity of Nature; and with regard to the character of the note, too, it is clear that if all the poets were natural their voices would all be distinct as their faces. And Mr. Meredith is fresh because he takes the natural initiative which is a man's natural right; it is unnatural to belong to a school, unnatural to use and abuse the vocabulary which others have set in vogue. After the individuality of the note comes its quality—beautiful or not beautiful. Mr. Meredith's note is at times excessively beautiful, always interesting, and always significant.

There are no disheartening shortcomings or boundaries in these large and vigorous poems. If every poet must have one of two demerits—faults or limitations—Mr. Meredith is to be congratulated on having faults, and not limitations. To our mind the possession of faults is preferable to that of limitations. At times he frees his reader's thought, sets him above the povertyes of time and place, and asks him, as Virgil asked Dante in an eternal world, "*Che pensi?*" "What thinkest thou?" Among the loveliest and most suggestive lines are

those on "The Day of the Daughter of Hades," in which the ever wonderful tale of Ceres and her child is told with a mysterious passionateness :—

He saw through leaves
The mother and daughter meet.
They stood by the chariot-wheel,
Embraced : very tall, most like
Fellow-poplars, wind-taken, that reel
Down their shivering columns and strike
Head to head, crossing throats : and apart,
For the feast of the look, they drew,
Which darkness no longer could thwart ;
And they broke together anew
Exulting to tears, flower and bud.

This is masterly imagery and purely magical poetry. It recalls that other exquisite image of the cloud-moon and the water-moon, by which Rossetti expressed the weeping together of the mother and daughter in "Rose Mary." But Rossetti's thought was more penetrating in its emotion ; Mr. Meredith's is more liberal and glorious.

Of the sonnets, the following on "Appreciation" is admirable for lucidity as well as for power of feeling and grace of metaphor :—

Earth was not earth before her sons appeared,
Nor beauty beauty ere young love was born :
And thou when I lay hidden wert as morn,
At city windows, touching eyelids bleared ;
To none by her fresh wingedness endeared ;
Unwelcome unto revellers outworn.
I the last echoes of Diana's horn
In woodland heard, and saw thee come, and cheered.
No longer wert thou then mere light, fair soul !
And more than simple duty moved thy feet.
New colours rose in thee, from fear, from shame,
From hope effused : though not less pure a scroll
May men lead on the heart I taught to beat :
That change in thee, if not thyself, I claim.

We have said that this is one of the more fortunate poets who have faults. The principal of these in his case is obscurity, seldom if ever unconquerable by a little application, but sometimes profound at the first glance. Again, Mr. Meredith has a way, which many must find distasteful, of overworking a simile too precisely and insistently. This is an instance:—

“Spiral” the memorable lady terms
Our minds’ ascent: our world’s advance presents
That figure on a flat; the way of worms.

By-the-way, who is the lady quoted? Will any of our readers tell us? The saying sounds like one of George Eliot’s, though we do not remember it in her writings. With regard to metrical form, it is to be noted that Mr. Meredith uses quantity in a manner unusual in English or any modern verse. Those of his poems in which this peculiarity occurs should be read in time as music is sung. Negroes would recite them to perfection. He evidently doubts his white readers’ comprehension of the rhythm intended, for he gives a guide to the scansion. This is a specimen of lines in which quantity plays this important part:—

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping
Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.

This is indeed *tempo marcato*; and we cannot but think the insistent rhythm is undignified. To thresh to, to march to, to rock or dance a baby to, quantitative verse is all very well; but accent is sufficient for poetry which is read in repose.

The volume of verse which bears “Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of the Earth” company on our table, is Mr. Swinburne’s new volume of “Roundels”—at the first glance more attractive than Mr. Meredith’s, but not winning the lingering re-perusal to which the latter persuades us. It would be difficult to find

faults in Mr. Swinburne, but his limitations are simply astonishing—they are so many, and they bound him so closely. They are more marked now that the time has come when he seeks his own inspirations, and no longer uses (with that impassioned receptiveness of his, which is in itself a kind of genius) the inspirations that have instructed the schools he admires. At first it was the Greek inspiration, and in "Atalanta in Calydon" he re-felt and re-expressed a "criticism of life" forgotten by the modern and Christianized world; then he seized French Republicanism and the ethics of Théophile Gauthier and Charles Baudelaire—that is, he seized the phrases of the professors of those principles. Doubtless he conceived and appropriated the principles too; but whereas most men begin with the principles, he evidently began with the phrases and went back to the principles, which he took by concomitance. In the last two or three volumes he has followed his own way more thoroughly than ever before. He has abandoned that attitude of impassioned receptiveness, and has set to work alone with Nature before him, and his art, and his vocabulary. The result is that every reader must be surprised at finding how little Mr. Swinburne has thought and felt at first-hand about anything in the world.

But as to the manner in which Mr. Swinburne says his little things, it has attained a rare perfection. It is not in the "Roundels," of course, that we look for the great, if somewhat breathless, movement of the verse in "Atalanta," or, for the significant music of some of the early poems—"Let us go hence, my Songs," for instance. But, on the other hand, we are not now worried by the too insistent and emphatic rhythm by which Mr. Swinburne used in old days to bring his readers under a kind of possession. All moves so easily and so sweetly, that the verse is indeed what Coleridge described

verse, as being—"a breeze." It flits, it pauses, warm and light. The poet toys with words to very charming purpose. And as to our above-written complaints of lack of thought, we refer the reader to Mr. Swinburne's own apology in the finished verses called "A Singing Lesson."

There is something almost pathetic in the way in which the Londoner of feeling clings to his antiquities. There are few of them, and for the most part they are moderately antique, but these very conditions make them precious. Remoteness is also added to the interest of London antiquities by the fact that Englishmen have no such continuity of life and manners with their past as exists in Italy, where the citizen of to-day is absolutely familiar with his own mediæval house and furniture, and the countryman follows a plough of Virgil's day. Between the English present and the English past there is a gulf fixed, broader and deeper than the chasm by which the Revolution cut through the continuity of national life in France—the gulf of the eighteenth century. We have an essential separateness from our older times hardly surpassed by that of Americans and colonists, and accentuated rather than contradicted by the dilettantism which makes us lovers of *bric-à-brac* and students in museums. The sad thing is that with all this respect and regard for our estranged and aloof past, people of feeling are in such a minority that their outcries are overpowered by the voices of self-interest and common utility. The fate of the very few remains of older London has not been averted nor deferred for a day ; and it remains for art, which cannot save the things themselves, to keep for us their semblances, as memorials of the times when some instinct, lost to the contemporary world in all countries, raised buildings which had the nameless felicity of lines and mass and accident. As poor Mr. Bunney (rewarded by the Venetians with the nickname of *il pazzo della*

piazza) went just before the restorers of St. Mark's, making portraits of what was about to be effaced for ever, so painters and etchers cannot do better service to Londoners than in making records of any courtyard or gable or chimney that remains of the picturesque past. The "Tabard Inn," gone for ever, was gone too soon ; but of the famous "White Hart" in the Borough—longer spared—we have a most artistic etching from the point of Mr. Percy Thomas, who immortalizes this quaint place, hardly altered in form but changed indeed in condition.

Technically Mr. Thomas's etching is full of very great distinction and grace of manner. A little more force and mass about the darker passages might have thrown the beautiful glimpse of sunny distance into greater brilliance and simplicity ; but we should be loth to accept this gain at any expense to the delicacy and restraint of the whole charming work. The point of view is from the inner corner of the quadrangular courtyard, which has its tiers of wooden-balustraded galleries. Above the sloping roof stream long shafts of sunshine ; the outer life of Southwark is seen in motion through the *porte cochère*. And the artist has wisely made no attempt to "restore." He has given us the old place exactly as it was in 1882 ; and it is the spectator's fancy which must re-people the "White Hart" with its old clients. Foremost will come the Kentish insurgents under that soldierly Cade whose dignity modern history has done something to restore :—"Will ye needs be hanged," he asks his followers, "with your pardons about your necks ? Hath my sword therefore broke through London gates that you should leave me at the 'White Hart' in Southwark ?" Cromwell, the all-crafty and all-resolute Minister of Henry the Eighth, the ruling spirit of the Reformation and the Tudor tyranny in England, had much secret business here. Hither

came the destroying flames in 1676, after which the Inn was rebuilt, so that old as our "White Hart" looks, it is but a moderate English antiquity. And here the young Charles Dickens, writing tentatively the book which our fathers loved, placed the people of his fancy—Sam Weller blackening the boots for the occupants of those old guest-chambers within the galleries, and the impulsive Mr. Pickwick, and Mr. Perker, Jingle, and the spinster whom Dickens treats so cruelly. For heartlessness, commend us after all to Dickens, not to Thackeray, so far at least as the grotesque in women is concerned.

The following bitter verses on "the Sunderland children" have been inspired by the small heed which England takes of her poor little ones ; by the luxury of woe she enjoys when a flock of them is swept to the un prevented destruction ; by the "threat" of future evil which is mingled with every child's promise of life ; and by the pathos of the distinct and separate characters crushed together in a mass in the late accident :—

THE SUNDERLAND CHILDREN.

This was the surplus childhood, held so cheap !
 Not worth the care which shields
 The lambs that are to slay, the corn to reap—
 The promise of the fields.

The nation guards her future. Fruits and grass
 And vegetable life
 Are fostered league by league. But O the mass
 Of childhood over-rife !

O mass, O units ! O the separate story
 Planned for each breather of breath !
 This futile young mankind, and transitory,
 Is left to stray to Death.

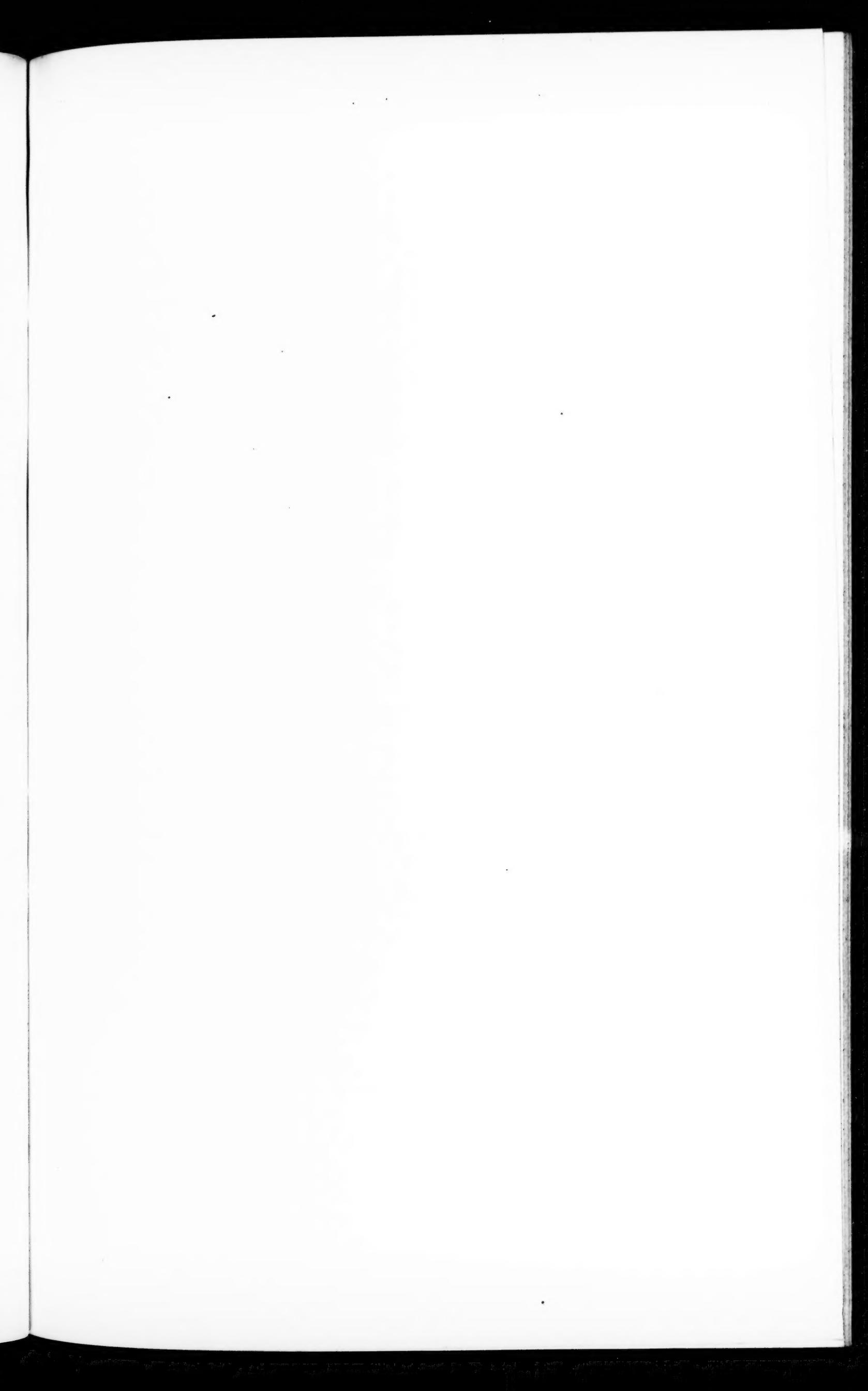
O promise, presage, menace ! Upon these
A certain seal is laid.
Unkept, unbroken, are the auguries
These little children made.

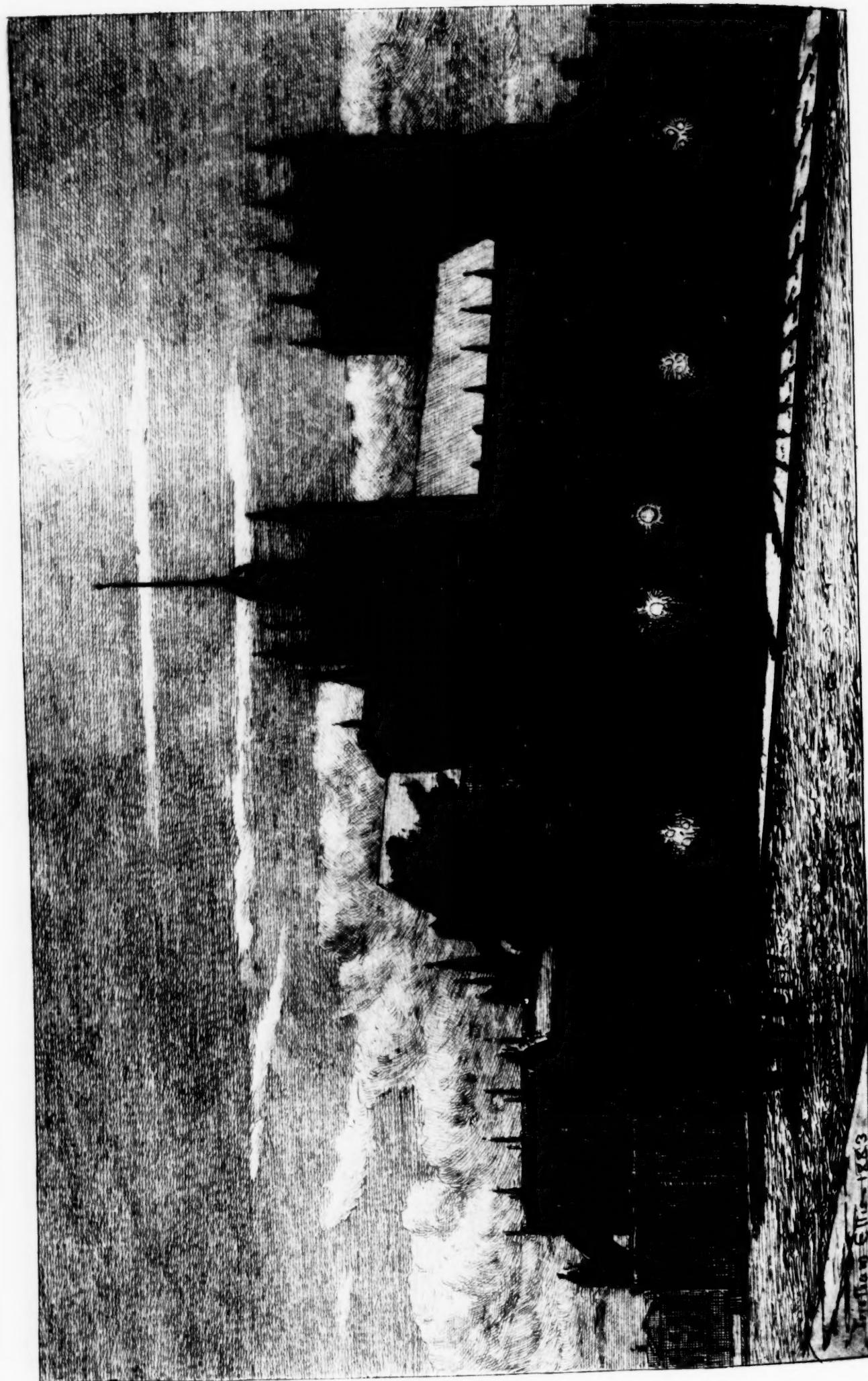
For threat is bound with promise ; and the nation
Holds festival of regret
Over these dead—dead in their isolation—
Wisely. She feared their threat.

It has taken London an astonishingly long time to realize and acknowledge the facts of its heavens and its horizons, the truth that smoke, rather than cloud, defiles its light and blots out its distances. But the truth is, that in a London winter the sight of a rain-cloud—its form and its colour—is a privilege not enjoyed many times in a month. We have a distinct recollection of our first satisfactory view of a cloud after an unbroken London winter ; a ray of unadulterated sunshine was of course out of the question, but the deprivation of clouds seemed a memorable kind of separation from Nature ! Of late, the Londoner has become fully awake to the actualities of smoke and soot, and some ambitious spirits are even indulging hopes of restoring to London, not only its clouds, but its sky, its distant prospects, its topography—that kind of general and geographical understanding of one's relations to the world around one, from which Londoners are curiously shut out, living, as they do, within the boundaries of their atmosphere.

It was a pleasure to see this topographical and pictorial side of the smoke question in a letter to the *Daily News*, signed "A.," from which an extract or two must be permitted us :—
"On a July Sunday evening few fires were burning in London. The storms had cleared the air ; a steady west wind, which

had gradually got rid of the morning's closeness and tempered the afternoon heat, freshened into a strong wind towards the evening, and blew what little smoke there might be hanging over the city far eastward. The sun was setting behind the northern hills, and sent a flood of light across the land. Let us see, from the summit of Parliament Hill, the result of these unwonted circumstances. At the foot of the hill breaks the foremost wave of the sea of bricks and mortar which stretches away into the distance ; scaffold poles and the débris of building are protruding into the fields like wreckage on the shore. Beyond this stretches out a mass of streets and houses, growing less and less distinct, as the waves of the sea seem to grow smaller out at sea. In the middle distance rises St. Paul's, like a grey flashing beacon on the dusky ocean. Beyond stretch less and less distinct streets, till all distinction fades into a russet network of dusky tangle ; while further back, and rising as if half-way up the bank of the opposite shore is seen the Crystal Palace, twinkling and shining in the mellow light which comes across the broad valley from setting sun. Above this, and miles away skyward, rises the blue outline of the Surrey hills, with faint and misty indications of chalk streaks and darker patches of trees and shadows ; the clearness of this line, and the distinctness of its undulations is very beautiful in the tender light shining full upon it from the sunset. The ridge of hill runs as far as the eye can see westward, fading more and more into a greyish blue, till it is lost behind the trees which rise to the right above South Hampstead. Thus was seen for once a clear and well-defined view of the Valley of the Thames."





WESTMINSTER ABBEY BY MOONLIGHT.

Engraved 1853